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Official Records

64th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 20 February 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Román-Morey (Peru), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 14 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Global launch of the International Year of Quinoa, 2013

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly will resume its consideration of agenda item 14 to mark the launch of the International Year of Quinoa, 2013, and to discuss the role that quinoa biodiversity can play in providing food security and nutrition and in the eradication of poverty.

Members will recall that the Assembly considered agenda item 14 jointly with agenda item 9, entitled "Report of the Economic and Social Council", at its 28th plenary meeting, on 22 October 2012. Members will also recall that, under agenda item 14, the Assembly adopted resolution 67/18 at its 43rd plenary meeting, on 28 November 2012.

(*spoke in English*)

It is now my privilege to read out the following remarks on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, who has been unexpectedly called away from New York. He has asked that I formally extend his apologies to our esteemed guests for not being able to be here in person.

"I would like to join the Assembly in celebrating the first International Year of Quinoa, 2013. I welcome the decision of the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Mr. José Graziano da Silva, on the appointment of His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, as a Special Ambassador for the International Year. This appointment recognizes his leadership and commitment to the fight against hunger and malnutrition. It is an honour to welcome President Morales Ayma back to the General Assembly. I would also like to congratulate Ms. Nadine Heredia de Humala, First Lady of Peru, on her nomination as a Special Ambassador.

"Too often in the past, we have heard extravagant claims for the benefits of different foods, but it is my opinion that, in quinoa, we truly have a plant that deserves the title of 'super food'. In many ways, that traditional staple of the Andes region represents many of the ideals and goals of the United Nations. It has an important role to play in ensuring food security, boosting nutrition and, ultimately, eradicating poverty. It also brings attention to the importance that the United Nations attaches to indigenous knowledge and practice. I am deeply proud, as President of the General Assembly, to be able to heighten global public awareness of the nutritional, economic and

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poverty-reducing benefits of that ancient grain. I am hopeful that we can do a much better job in awareness-raising.

"Quinoa is a true gift from the Andes to the world — one for which I believe we should all be very grateful. The General Assembly recognizes the contribution of the Andean peoples who have nurtured and preserved it for present and future generations. Their ancient practices have respected the land and laws of nature, while providing untold benefits to them. We should pay tribute to their national and traditional knowledge and to their careful cultivation of the plant for its exceptional nutritional and medicinal qualities. I am sure that quinoa will be a topic of discussion in the General Assembly's high-level plenary meeting known as the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples, which will be held in September 2014.

"The grain is extremely high in protein and, according to guidelines established by the FAO, it is considered to be the only plant in the world that contains all the essential amino acids. In that respect, it provides superior nutrition to wheat, barley and soy beans, and compares favourably to milk protein. It also has a high percentage of dietary fibre, which makes it an ideal food to detoxify the body. It is rich in minerals, vitamins and healthy fats. Many schools in Ecuador and Peru are now including it in students' breakfast rations. In addition, the grain has been used in traditional medicine since ancient times for treating a wide range of health-related issues, including abscesses, bleeding and dislocations, as well as sore throats and stomach complaints.

"Quinoa is a highly resilient and versatile plant that grows in adverse climatic regions from sea level up to elevations of 4,000 metres — areas where most crops will simply not thrive. Its remarkable adaptability to different climates and different agricultural zones makes it an excellent crop in these unpredictable times of climate change. In addition, it is very cheap to produce and requires little in the way of inputs and labour.

"Quinoa may have its origins in the Andean region, but today this super food is beyond doubt a global crop. Its cultivation is expanding across regions and continents. Bolivia remains the world's leading producer, followed by Peru, the United States, Ecuador and Canada. It is also cultivated in northern and southern Europe, East Africa and the Himalayas and on the plains of northern India. In tropical areas, such as the savannas of Brazil, there has been experimental cultivation since 1987, and higher yields than in the Andean region have been reported.

"While the cultivation of quinoa increases across the world, research by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations shows that the grain has a huge potential to contribute to securing the food needs of some of the world's most vulnerable people. Indeed, it could play a significant role in solving the global food crisis by providing many countries with a buffer against volatile prices and a viable alternative to importing food or relying on external aid.

"Let us not forget that, according to the FAO, worldwide there are some 870 million people who are undernourished, the vast majority of whom are in developing countries. A considerable number of those people live in Africa. Quinoa is not a panacea for malnutrition across the continent but my question is: could it not play a role in keeping people fed and healthy, as it does in the Andes? That is an example of South-South cooperation that I, as President, would wholeheartedly endorse.

"Ensuring that the world is food secure and that no one goes hungry requires varied and concurrent steps, the first of which is the strengthening and revitalization of the agriculture sector, especially in the poorest countries. One way that could happen is through the empowerment of indigenous people, especially women, rural communities and small and medium-sized farmers. The Andean people have known for centuries how to grow and use quinoa, and the rest of the globe can learn a great deal from that vast wealth of knowledge. The Bolivian people are now reaping the financial benefits of that knowledge. Small farmers are planting and selling more of the crop and are seeing a significant improvement in their standard of living.

"Nevertheless, the developed world has its role to play in providing technical and financial assistance to further expand its cultivation, build capacity and transfer good practices. It is my opinion that a continued interest in quinoa as a beneficial food across the world not only will

help to boost the economies of nations in the Andean region by increasing exports but also will encourage more farmers in developing countries to cultivate the plant.

"Food security is one of the chief building blocks of poverty eradication and a Millennium Development Goal. It is my hope that we can look forward to quinoa playing an enhanced role in the Zero Hunger Challenge, launched by the Secretary-General to eliminate hunger within our lifetime. As the Secretary-General said at last year's World Food Prize Ceremony, achieving this goal depends on forging partnerships that make a difference.

"It is perhaps not surprising that the FAO has identified quinoa as one of the world's most promising crops. Even the National Aeronautics and Space Administration is researching the value of quinoa as a food fit for astronauts and long-duration space travel. Our concerns are for more earthly matters, such as how to harness the unquestionable potential of that humble plant for the benefit of humanity.

"The motto of the International Year of Quinoa is 'A future planted thousands of years ago'. It is my hope that quinoa will furnish the most vulnerable people with a dignified, healthy and secure future. It could truly provide nature's answers to global hunger."

(*spoke in Spanish*)

Continuing in my national capacity, I would simply like to say that for me, speaking on behalf of Peru, it is a special pleasure to be here at such an important and significant event as the launch of the International Year of Quinoa. As the primary producing country of that 1,000-year-old grain, for us, together with Bolivia and other Andean nations, this event is also a reaffirmation of our vast cultural heritage and its contribution to the well-being and healthy nourishment of the world. Quinoa's contribution to food, nutrition and agriculture once again underscores the importance of the sustainable use of biodiversity resources and their associated traditional knowledge. It brings a cautionary and urgent message regarding the role that biodiversity plays and meeting international commitments to biodiversity in order to achieve sustainable development and food security.

I recall with great pride that Peru sponsored, together with Bolivia and other brotherly countries, the proposal to adopt a resolution on declaring the year 2013 the International Year of Quinoa. That initiative was implemented by the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 66/221 in December 2011. Today, from this rostrum, Peru therefore reaffirms its commitment to actively participate in developing initiatives and projects made possible during the International Year of Quinoa, in particular those related to benefiting from quinoa as a key food source to combat hunger and poverty.

We thank all Member States for their commitment to and solidarity with our Andean peoples, as demonstrated by our launching of the International Year of Quinoa today.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I thank all those present for joining us to celebrate the International Year of Quinoa. This extraordinary grain has been a cultural anchor and a staple in the diet of millions of people throughout the Andes for thousands of years. Thanks to the initial efforts of Bolivia and the agreement of the General Assembly, quinoa is now poised for global recognition. I commend President Morales for his foresight and his commitment to the important issue of food and nutrition security.

Last year, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Brazil, I launched the Zero Hunger Challenge. Quinoa can make a significant contribution. The grain has two great advantages.

First, it is highly nutritious. It is gluten-free. It contains all the essential oils and amino acids and is a good source of calcium, iron and protein.

Secondly, quinoa is adaptable. It can be grown in many different ecological and climatic conditions, including where the soil moisture is low. That is especially important in a warming world, in which desertification and land degradation are becoming ever more pressing issues.

The tolerance of quinoa to arid conditions makes it an attractive crop for farmers in all regions. That is why quinoa cultivation is expanding from the Andean region to include Kenya, India, North America and Europe. Most quinoa growers are small-scale farmers. The crop holds the promise of improved income, which

is a key plank of the Zero Hunger Challenge. Some of the poorest Andean indigenous smallholders have already benefited greatly from rising prices with the growing popularity of quinoa in export markets.

But let us also beware of potential pitfalls. As prices rise along with export demand, the poor risk being excluded from their staple grain in local markets in favour of cheaper, less nutritious processed food. Even growers can be tempted to sell their entire crop and eat less healthily.

Many nations in South America are making strong progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of reducing hunger by half. That has been achieved not just by increasing food production, but by reducing poverty and increasing access to nutritious food. Quinoa can play an important role in helping accelerate progress in South America and beyond.

The deadline for the MDGs is fast approaching. Much remains to be done. We must especially work to close the gaps among and within countries. Too many inequalities remain, particularly among remote and indigenous communities, where child malnutrition and stunting are still prevalent.

The First Lady of Peru, Ms. Heredia de Humala, is a committed member of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement Lead Group. She knows that the first 1,000 days of a child's life are decisive in determining his or her future health, intelligence and ability to contribute to society. Mothers and children need the best nutrition available. That is why the Government of Bolivia is supplying quinoa as part of a nutritional supplement programme to pregnant and nursing women, and Peru is incorporating quinoa in school breakfasts.

I believe that quinoa is truly a food for the MDGs and can make an important contribution to post-2015 development strategies. I hope that this International Year of Quinoa will be a catalyst for learning about the potential of quinoa for food and nutrition security, for reducing poverty — especially among the world's small farmers — and for environmentally sustainable agriculture.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention a third advantage to quinoa, beyond nutrition and adaptability. It is versatile and delicious, as we will discover soon when we meet for lunch. Let us work together to make sure the benefits of this extraordinary grain can be felt by those who need it most. Let us use the International Year of Quinoa to reap the harvest of the future sown thousands of years ago.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his important statement.

The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

President Morales Ayma (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and the social movements, in particular producers of quinoa, we appreciate the significant effort of the United Nations in launching the International Year of Quinoa, 2013. We greet all the special guests here today and the representatives of the entire world.

Quinoa is an ancestral gift of the Andean people, which has been produced for more than 7,000 years and represents a valuable alternative in the current food crisis. The International Year of Quinoa is an acknowledgement of the traditional practices of the indigenous people of the Andes that, in harmony with nature, have maintained, managed and preserved quinoa in its natural state as a food for current and future generations.

In a world ruled by capitalism, the population's food requirements have become a business for profit and to promote greed for gain. The major multinational food companies seek to control the production of food and to dominate global markets by imposing their customs and foods. The only goal of such producers is to generate profits. So they standardize food and drinks, turning them into global foods produced on a massive scale with the same formula. They contain chemical ingredients that make them cheaper but that cause cancer and other diseases for their consumers. They are not interested in the health of human beings, only in their earnings and corporate profits.

In the face of the global food crisis, the Andean peoples have several proposals, and one of them is quinoa. For 7,000 years, our peoples have improved that grain, which is a gift from Mother Earth, and developing and perfecting its dietary, medicinal and regular uses.

In the sixteenth century, the European invasion sought to eliminate that grain by demonizing quinoa and prohibiting its cultivation, storage and consumption. They looked down on quinoa as food for Indians. I clearly remember that when I was a child quinoa was

very undervalued, as were the Indians. Today quinoa is highly valued by *gringos* and in the West.

The true and powerful nutritional value of quinoa has now been discovered, in particular of the royal quinoa that grows in the Bolivian highlands. Despite the persecution and the colonial and neocolonial stigma with regard to our product that indigenous people suffered over centuries — in the twentieth century it was contemptuously called the "food of the Indians", which prevented the world from knowing and enjoying it — I want to say to those here that quinoa is seen today by multinational companies as a threat to their food-production empire, which is junk food and of low nutritional value and permeated with chemicals that cause diseases. They claim that indigenous people should not benefit from the sale of quinoa and the increase in its prices to ensure fairer prices. For that reason, some non-governmental organizations and major international companies asked their Governments to oppose Bolivia's initiative to declare 2013 the International Year of Quinoa, so that this product, with its inherent nutritional and medicinal content, would not spread throughout the world. The Governments of those multinational companies, led by the Government of the United States of America, strongly opposed the International Year of Quinoa. However, thanks to the conscience of many countries, the International Year of Quinoa was declared and today we are working together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to ensure that its virtues are known and to try to change the multinational model, which has made the right of the peoples of the world to feed themselves a business that seeks only profit and more profit.

We condemn the fact that those companies are now trying to ensure that the International Year of Quinoa fails, with the argument that the promotion of quinoa will lead to an increase in the price of that product and that it will not be accessible to the peoples who produce it. I would like to say to my brothers and sisters here that the production of quinoa in Bolivia is increasing year after year. There has been a 10 per cent increase in the harvest as compared to the previous year. It is not true that owing to an increase in the price of quinoa, there will be less and less quinoa consumption in the producing countries. Over the course of four years, the consumption of quinoa in Bolivia increased threefold, from 4,000 to 12,000 metric tons. The per capita consumption has grown from under 0.35 to 1.11 kilograms. Given how demonized and penalized the consumption of quinoa is, our domestic market for quinoa is small, but it is starting to grow.

Faced with the food crisis, it is vitally important to decolonize the conventional diet in order to nourish ourselves with all the foods that benefit humankind as a whole. The components of this product, which is so important for humankind, include the 20 amino acids, including the 10 essential ones for human development. It is a grain that meets the lysine requirements in a similar way to milk. That amino acid, among other things, helps to develop human brain cells and is rich in vitamins A, C, D, B1 and B2 and folic acid. It is high in minerals such as iron, calcium and phosphorus. If we were to make a comparison chart with other products — such as flour, soya and even milk — quinoa has more grams in every 100 grams of important elements: isoleucine, 5.2 grams; arginine, 7.9 grams; phenylalanine, 3.8 grams; histidine, 2.7 grams; leucine, 6.7 grams; lysine, 6.2 grams; methionine, 1.4 grams; threonine, 4.1 grams; tryptophan, 1.2 grams; valine, 4.6 grams; aspartic acid, 8.1 grams; glutamic acid, 14 grams; alanine, 4.4 grams; cysteine, 1.4 grams; glycine, 5.7 grams; proline, 4 grams; serine, 4.6 grams; and tyrosine, 3.1 grams. Scientific research by international organizations has demonstrated the nutritional value of quinoa.

Quinoa can alleviate hunger in the face of climate change. One of the main effects of climate change, which is caused by ruthless industrial capitalism, is that water is becoming increasingly scarce throughout the world. In a study entitled, "A Special Report on Water", published in May 2012 by the British weekly *The Economist*, warned that water was the new oil — a resource that is becoming increasingly costly and is the subject of growing demand. Aquifers are drying up; glaciers are melting; reserves are evaporating; and rivers no longer reach the seas. I could include my own experience in Bolivia: wells are drying up, and when we dig for water, the water is found at increasingly deeper levels and in smaller quantities.

According to studies, climate change threatens to worsen that situation. Each of us will have to consume less water if we want to ensure that famine, pestilence and mass immigration do not destroy the planet. The way things are going, wars will break out between countries over arguments about rights to water reserves and rivers. Water is already scarce in many parts of the world and is becoming an increasingly scarce resource.

The Earth's population is expressed on the magnitude of billions — 6 billion in 2000, 7 billion in 2010 and by 2050 there wi'l be 9 billion people on the planet. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the proportion of people living in countries with a chronic lack of water was 8 per cent, or 500 million people. It is estimated that by 2050 it will be 45 per cent, or 4 billion people. One billion people go to bed hungry because there is not enough water to grow food.

The increasing demand for water in the agricultural industry is created not only by the increasing number of mouths to be fed, but also by people's desire to consume more appetizing and interesting food. It takes twice as much water to produce 1 kilogram of peanuts than 1 kilogram of soybean flakes, almost four times as much to produce 1 kilogram of meat than 1 kilogram of chicken, and nearly five times as much to produce a glass of orange juice than a glass of tea. With more than 22 per cent of water used in industry and 8 per cent for domestic purposes, the demand for water quadrupled in the second half of the twentieth century.

Given that situation, to those here today and those listening throughout the world, I say that the production of quinoa is an excellent opportunity to satisfy the hunger in the world, using little water. Used to growing in Bolivia's arid mountain ranges for thousands of years and in the Andes, quinoa needs little water and is resistant to plagues and other weather phenomena. I can only reaffirm how, in my experience, quinoa resists drought and frost in my birthplace, Orinoco.

A quarter of Bolivia's municipalities produce quinoa. According to data and research, there are 1,300 varieties of quinoa. Bolivia is the world's primary producer, with 47 per cent of the global supply. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations confirms that quinoa can grow in the harshest conditions, withstanding temperatures from minus 8° C to 31° C. It can be sown from sea level up to an altitude of 4,000 metres, and it is resistant to drought and poor soil, as well as frost.

Lastly, ancestral understanding and the scientific knowledge of indigenous peoples are a policy for dealing with climate change and its consequences. States and private entities should ensure greater investment not in order to gain money but for the life of humankind. Faced with crises, we as politicians and Governments should stop politics from being deals and profit. Politics should become a service, sacrifice and greater commitment to the peoples of the world. We should implement complementary policies, and not competitiveness. I wish to say again that, whenever there is competition, there will always be injustice and poverty. The consumerist food policies of the capitalist system cannot ensure the survival or the dignity of humankind. I therefore reaffirm that quinoa has as much protein as milk and, as it is gluten-free, it helps the diet of those who are allergic.

Finally, I wish to say that in this International Year of Quinoa 2013 we should ask ourselves whether we are going to have the organic quinoa from the indigenous groups of the Andes or the fast food of the West. Members know that, unfortunately, with such consumerist policies, the fast food of the West is doing a great deal of harm to humankind. It is therefore important to encourage the production and fair trade of that product, which is so important to life and humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for his statement.

As noted in the programme, the presidency has invited the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Mr. José Graziano da Silva, to participate in this meeting. Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, without setting a precedent, to invite Mr. Graziano da Silva to make a statement at this meeting?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Mr. José Graziano da Silva.

Mr. Da Silva (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) (*spoke in Spanish*): Every human being has the right to adequate nutrition. That is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Today, however, there are 870 million people suffering from hunger. Hunger causes the death of children and affects the human development of the poorest and most vulnerable people. It results in loss of life through premature death and

disability. It is, in turn, the cause and the consequence of extreme poverty.

We cannot stand idly by when one in eight people in the world lives in hunger. We must acknowledge that reality, marshall our efforts and fight with passion, for the means to put an end to hunger exist. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is committed to helping to eliminate poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition. That requires the leadership and commitment of countries, adequate governance mechanisms and the support of the international community and civil society and private initiatives. Eradicating hunger is not a matter for a Government but for a society.

We are approaching the year 2015, which is the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The most recent figures of the FAO show us that nearly 50 countries have already reached the goal of halving the undernourished population. In order for all countries to reach that goal, we need additional momentum. Let us do that and use the situation to set ourselves an even more ambitious goal for beyond 2015, that is, to completely eradicate hunger from the face of the Earth, by heeding the appeal made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in launching the Zero Hunger Challenge at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

We are here to recruit a new ally in combating hunger and food insecurity — quinoa. It is an Andean grain that has been protected by the indigenous peoples of the Andes for thousands of years. It is a food with unique qualities, not only because of its essential amino acids and vitamins necessary for life but also due to its extraordinary capacity to adapt to different agricultural conditions. Quinoa can withstand extreme temperatures. It can grow at high altitudes, tolerate drought and grow in poor soil of high salinity. In addition to the Andean countries, quinoa can be grown in France, England, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Italy, the United States of America and Canada. There have been great seed yields in Kenya and Mali. Moreover, according to the FAO's initial assessments, it could be successfully cultivated from the Himalayas to the northern plains of India, in the countries of the Sahel, as well as in Yemen and in other arid regions of the world.

The International Year of Quinoa is not only an opportunity to stimulate the development of the crop at the global level, but it is also an opportunity to recognize the fact that the challenges of the modern world can be faced if we use the accumulated wisdom of ancestral peoples and small family farmers, who currently are the ones who are producing the majority of food crops, including quinoa. For that reason, it is a great pleasure for me to come before the Assembly today during the launch of the International Year of Quinoa with the certainty that, thanks to the coordinated efforts of Governments, development agencies, civil society and the private sector, we will be able to use the many benefits and move towards our common goal of achieving a hunger-free world — a world with zero hunger, as was proposed by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon when he launched the Zero Hunger Challenge.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rafael Roncagliolo Orbegoso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Roncagliolo Orbegoso (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am honoured and proud to represent Peru at this ceremony to launch the International Year of Quinoa. I welcome that initiative, which was presented by the Bolivian Government and approved by the General Assembly. The Government of President Ollanta Humala Tasso and Peru enthusiastically join in that initiative.

Quinoa, along with the potato, which is today consumed throughout the world, has formed the basis of the diet of the Andean peoples for more than 5,000 years. Tiwanaku, the Incan empire and the other pre-Hispanic cultures knew about both its nutritional properties as well as its medicinal and cosmetic properties. The nutritional value of quinoa allowed our forefathers to resist the tough conditions of the Conquest. The use of quinoa in their ceremonies and rituals led the conquistadors to associate them with supposed demonic influences. Its use was prohibited by the conquistadors, as were other Andean products.

Quinoa, as was mentioned already this morning, comes from the Andean highlands, specifically from the Lake Titicaca basin, but its cultivation extended, as did the Incan empire, from Pasto in Colombia to the south of Chile and to Jujuy and Salta in Argentina.

Today quinoa production is making a comeback in very different places throughout the world, as the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has just recalled. The launch of the International Year of Quinoa by the

United Nations is a revindication of the "golden grain", as we call quinoa. It is a recognition of the Andean peoples and, in particular, of Andean women, who have preserved that grain despite the prohibitions imposed by fear of the unknown.

We are making this claim for quinoa at the very moment when South America is becoming an important player on the international scene. Today quinoa represents the integration project of South American countries. Just as that tiny seed germinates in the Andes and opens up unimagined possibilities to meet the food needs at the global level, an unprecedented process of political convergence has been allowing the countries of South America to play an increasingly important role in the contemporary international system.

Bolivia is the world's main producer of quinoa, with Peru being the second, responsible for 42 per cent of global production. Peruvian exports of quinoa grew considerably between 2008 and 2012 — by more than 143 per cent. That was of course prompted by greater demand for the product due to its nutritional and gastronomic qualities. Last year Peru exported approximately $30 million in quinoa to 37 markets, including the United States, Canada, Australia, Germany, Israel and others.

For that reason, in tribute to its own indigenous cultures, Peru has played an active role in the International Coordination Committee for the International Year of Quinoa, along with Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador. Peru welcomes the appointment of the First Lady of our country, Ms. Nadine Heredia de Humala, as Special Ambassador for the International Year of Quinoa. That illustrates and confirms our commitment.

At the national level, we have set up working groups to develop policies and strategies that guarantee the right to food and nutrition for all, particularly for the most vulnerable population, as is the proper role for a Government — that of President Ollanta Humala Tasso — that is strongly aligned with the working class and committed to inclusive growth. We are also promoting a diet based on indigenous food, such as quinoa, tarwi, canihua and other foods.

In South America, we are designing tourist trails in which quinoa and other Andean grains serve as the basis for an experiential tourism. Similarly, we have planned a joint project with our partners in the Andean region that will include exchange visits of producers and industrialists of quinoa in order to ensure the growth of the crop. Our joint projects with brotherly countries in the region and the integration processes that South America is participating in should allow us to give enhanced value to the whole of our historical, cultural and natural heritage. We are proud of that heritage, and Peru promotes it actively within the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and in the establishment of genuine South American civic identity.

The Year of Quinoa will give a major boost to those initiatives. At least 130,000 small producers in South America will benefit through increased sales and better prices for their harvests. Consumers will also benefit from healthful food at a reasonable price. Quinoa will be more available and will contribute to public food programmes and Governmental campaigns to promote healthier eating habits than junk food consumption by our people.

Because of its nutritional calories quinoa was and remains the golden grain. In the past, the golden grain was feared and banned by the conquistadores — the golden grain which today the United Nations and its Food and Agriculture Organization are vindicating. That vindication is the vindication of the Andean world. Quinoa is one of our most valued products, and we make it available to the international community in order to contribute to providing food and overcoming poverty throughout the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Ms. Silvana Vallejo, Vice-Minister for Rural Development of Ecuador.

Ms. Vallejo (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Some years ago, who could have imagined that today, on 20 February 2013, the world would turn its sights to a small grain of quinoa — a tiny grain but one with a nutritional, cultural and spiritual wealth that would reduce the problems of world hunger? That grain has a great similarity to my country, Ecuador, a small country in size but rich in social, cultural and spiritual wealth, enormous biodiversity and invaluable food wealth bequeathed to us by our ancestors, which we must care for and protect.

In Ecuador, we are working to consolidate knowledge generated nationally and globally to create new knowledge that enables us to produce, in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner, nutritionally complete products based on our wealth in culture and

food. Those products will allow us to ensure our food sovereignty and, with innovative knowledge, contribute to improving the global food supply, which is the overarching objective for our well-being.

Countless historians have described the production of the pre-Hispanic peoples of what is now Ecuador, the Cañaris and the Puruhaes, among others. Those peoples recognized the importance of that crop and considered it to be the food of the gods. Food acculturation by the Spanish sidelined that food so that it remained hidden for many years on small farms in the highlands of Ecuador, protected and cared for Andean women and men. Ecuador has protected approximately 235 genotypes of quinoa, which have been collected and studied by our scientists. That research allows us to know the cultivation and crop-rotation systems used by our ancestors when growing quinoa, respecting the fertility of Pachamama, the fertility of our Mother Earth.

It is thus our cultural heritage, the heritage of Ecuador, that was carefully protected and developed in those small family farms, which we now recognize as guardians of agro-biodiversity and producers of more than 60 per cent of the country's food. The tradition and the knowledge gained over the years with respect to growing quinoa mean that we face the challenge of finding well-being for the rural sector while respecting cultures, traditions and the environment, and dealing with the poverty and malnutrition that affects mainly the Ecuadorian rural sector through concrete and innovative actions.

Meeting the challenge involves strengthening public policies at home aimed at boosting rural household income with technologies that minimize the environmental and social impact of production and that allow the development of products with high added value by associative rural enterprises for domestic and international consumers; strengthening farmers' organizations so that the necessary social processes and technological resources are empowered to achieve good rural living; promoting science and knowledge to enable the development of innovative technologies and practices while recognizing the ancestral knowledge also referred to by previous speakers; and strengthening food sovereignty, boosting the consumption of healthful, nutritious and culturally appropriate foods.

Internationally, in July 2013, Ecuador will be the seat of the fourth World Congress of Quinoa — the first symposium on Andean grains to take place in our northern province of Imbabura, which is the cradle of the ancient peoples who were quinoa producers, as well as a place chosen for one of the largest investments ever made in science and technology by the national Government. We will create there a city of knowledge called Yachay.

Ecuador invites the General Assembly to discover through quinoa its people, its history, its food and environmental heritage, its scientific heritage and work aimed at generating knowledge for innovation in the production, processing and consumption of complete, varied and cultural food products that are environmentally sustainable and that contribute to food sovereignty and good living for rural farm families throughout the world, whose well-being we have selected as our development model.

I invite the Assembly to discover Ecuador in the International Year of Quinoa.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Fiji, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Thomson (Fiji): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We note with appreciation the sentiments echoed in the statements this morning to launch of the International Year of Quinoa. The year 2013 has been declared International Year of Quinoa in recognition of the indigenous peoples of the Andes, who, thanks to their traditional knowledge and living practices, have maintained, controlled, protected and preserved quinoa as a food for present and future generations.

Quinoa is the only plant food that contains all the essential amino acids, vitamins and trace elements and is also gluten-free. Moreover, the crop is extraordinarily adaptable to different agro-ecological zones, being grown in areas with relative humidity from 40 per cent to 88 per cent, from sea level to 4,000 metres and in temperatures from minus 8° C to 38° C. It is a water-efficient crop and is tolerant and resistant to a lack of soil moisture.

The Group of 77 views the launch of the International Year of Quinoa as constituting a first step in an ongoing process to focus world attention on quinoa's important role. Quinoa's biodiversity and nutritional value make it central to providing food security and nutrition and to poverty eradication, in support of the achievement of

the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. We expect all initiatives to be implemented during the International Year of Quinoa and the proposed programmes and actions in the master plan to be a catalyst to enable the exchange of information and to start generating medium- and long-term programmes and projects for the sustainable development of the cultivation of quinoa nationally and globally.

The Group of 77 takes due note of the proposed themes of the high-level panel on food security and nutrition during this global launch of the International Year of Quinoa. We wish to recall and highlight the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which re-establishes the right of everyone to have access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger.

The world's food production and distribution situation presents challenges of great magnitude to the four pillars of food security, namely, availability, access, consumption and biological utilization. In that context, quinoa constitutes a strategic crop with the potential to contribute to food security and sovereignty due to its inherent qualities. We note its nutritional quality, genetic variability, adaptability to adverse climate and soil conditions and low production cost. The cultivation of quinoa provides an alternative for countries with limited food production that would otherwise be forced to import food or to receive food aid.

The Group reiterates that, in the light of the extensive research carried out to date, quinoa is one of the few crops that develop without much difficulty in extreme climate and soil conditions. Its great adaptability to climate variability and its efficient use of water make quinoa an excellent alternative crop in the face of climate change, which is altering the agricultural calendar and causing ever more extreme temperatures.

The Group of 77 emphasizes the urgent need to increase efforts at the national, regional and international levels to address food security and agriculture development as an integral part of the international development agenda. In that connection, we call for an enhanced and lasting international partnership and cooperation among public, non-governmental and private stakeholders in the quinoa crop. We stress the need for sustained funding and increased targeted investment to enhance world food production. We call for new and additional financial resources from all sources to achieve sustainable agriculture development and food security.

It would be remiss of the Group not to take advantage of this occasion to re-emphasize that the agricultural subsidies and other trade distortions of developed countries have severely harmed the agricultural sector in developing countries. They have limited the ability of that key sector to contribute meaningfully to poverty eradication, rural development and sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth. We therefore again urge developed countries to demonstrate the necessary flexibility and political will to meaningfully address those key concerns of developing countries.

In conclusion, the Group wishes to acknowledge specifically the presence of the Special Ambassadors for the International Year of Quinoa, His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of Bolivia, and Her Excellency Ms. Nadine Heredia de Humala, First Lady of Peru. It is our desire to see quinoa — "a future sown thousands of years ago" — recognized and accepted throughout the world as a natural food resource with a vital role in food security, nutrition and the eradication of poverty, in support of the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba, who will speak on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Cuba has the great honour to speak on behalf of the 33 member States that make up the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). We affectionately greet His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the brotherly people of Bolivia, who honours us with his presence at this important event. We would also like to extend a warm welcome to Ms. Nadine Heredia de Humala, First Lady of Peru, who is with us today.

We convey the appreciation of the Heads of State and Government of the Latin America and the Caribbean States for resolution 66/221, which declared 2013 the International Year of Quinoa, at the summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held on 27 and 28 January in Chile. In the resolution, the General Assembly encouraged all Member States,

the organizations of the United Nations system and all other relevant stakeholders to take advantage of the International Year in order to promote the sustainable use of quinoa and the traditional knowledge of the Andean and other indigenous peoples and to share good practices on implementing activities during the Year, as set out in the master plan, entitled "A future sown thousands of years ago".

At the same time, we welcome with great enthusiasm at the decision of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to appoint His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and Ms. Nadine Heredia de Humala, First Lady of Peru, as its Special Ambassadors for the International Year of Quinoa.

Given its high nutritional value, the growing of quinoa can play a very important role in achieving food and nutrition security and in eradicating poverty and hunger at the global level. Indigenous peoples in our region, through their traditional knowledge and practices based on the philosophy of living well in harmony with nature, have maintained, managed, protected and preserved quinoa in its natural state. That has enabled those peoples, through their ancestral wisdom and heritage, to introduce today to the international community a sustainable and viable alternative to contribute to the fight against hunger throughout the world.

The Governments and peoples of CELAC would like to reiterate our commitment to promoting the cultivation of traditional food crops, of which quinoa is an example, and the necessity and importance of spreading the nutritional qualities of traditional foods worldwide by supporting research and development programmes on specific traditional food crops, including quinoa cultivation, as a viable alternative for alleviating the hunger and poverty of the millions of people worldwide who suffer from those scourges.

Speaking now in my national capacity, allow me first of all to convey the warmest greetings of the Cuban people and authorities to His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. It is an honour for us to have him with us at this important event, which is a magnificent contribution to the fight against malnutrition and hunger worldwide. Our greetings also go to Ms. Nadine Heredia de Humala and the other ministers with us.

There are more than 870 million people suffering from malnutrition, of whom 850 million are men, women and children living in developing countries. Food is not just a vital need: more than anything else it is a human right for individuals and peoples. The food crisis, which is a chronic scourge that goes hand in hand with the current international order, has been worsened by the negative effects of that global systemic crisis, with its economic, financial and energy drawbacks, coupled with the devastating effects of climate change and the policies of some developed countries to reserve significant quantities of grains and cereals for the production of biofuels.

The runaway increase in food prices has prevented a growing number of people from realizing their right to food. The heart of that problem lies in the unfair distribution of wealth at the global level and the growing trend towards the concentration and monopolization of the production and distribution of foods and agricultural products. There will be no solution as long as the large multinational food companies of the agro-food industry control the prices, technologies, standards, certifications, distribution channels and sources of financing for the global production of food.

Cuba welcomes the initiative led by President Evo Morales Ayma to establish 2013 as the International Year of Quinoa. That cereal has been catalogued by the FAO as one of the promising crops for humankind not only because of its beneficial properties and numerous uses, but also because it is a viable alternative to meeting the major problems of nutrition that our planet faces. The ancestral knowledge and culture of the indigenous Andean peoples make an effective and sustainable contribution to resolving a serious problem whose root cause is based on the selfishness, waste and consumerism imposed by the main centres of power of the global capitalist system. We hope that the entire international community, including developed countries, will provide the necessary support to this laudable initiative, which can help to save millions of individuals from hunger.

We thank and wish the greatest success to President Evo Morales Ayma and Ms. Heredia de Humala and all the other eminent persons who have supported this initiative in favour of humankind. We reiterate the full support of Cuba's Government and people.

Mrs. Ribeiro Viotti (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to welcome President Evo

Morales Ayma and congratulate him on his initiative to declare 2013 as the International Year of Quinoa.

(*spoke in English*)

As pointed out by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), quinoa, which is of Andean origin, is recognized and accepted around the world as a natural food resource with high nutritional value. Moreover, the crop is remarkably adaptable, not only to different agro-ecological regions but also to different socioeconomic contexts, as highlighted by the successful coexistence of both traditional and industrial methods of production. For all those reasons, the contribution of quinoa to health and food and nutrition security and sustainable development for present and future generations is being increasingly acknowledged.

In that regard, we commend the appointment of President Morales Ayma and Ms. Nadine Heredia de Humala, First Lady of Peru, as FAO Special Ambassadors for the International Year of Quinoa. The ever-growing attention to quinoa also demonstrates a recognition of the value of the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples in the Americas originally cultivated many important food staples that formed the basis of our diets today, such as maize, cassava and potato. Brazil has always stressed the importance of protecting traditional knowledge, which is an essential component of the lifestyles of indigenous communities and makes an invaluable contribution to all our societies.

Brazil is fully committed to working towards a world free from hunger. Yet we remain aware that, in spite of some progress, much remains to be done. The recent food crisis has exposed the limits of the current systems and institutions, including those that govern the world food trade, to respond to the needs of poor people affected by substantial shocks. Brazil reaffirms that access to safe and nutritious food is a human right. The implementation of our commitments to realize the human right to food for all should be informed by the Voluntary Guidelines on the right to food.

Brazil would like to emphasize the central role of the FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme as the primary bodies of the United Nations family for promoting agricultural development and food security. Other institutions and initiatives also play an important complementary role that is coordinated by the Rome-based bodies, including working through the Committee on World Food Security. Brazil welcomes the progress made towards the implementation of the reform agreed in 2009, which is currently being implemented and aims at improving the Committee on Food Security as the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for a broad range of committed stakeholders to work together on food security.

We would like to conclude by stressing the importance of this International Year for raising awareness about a crop that can make a decisive contribution to achieving sustainable development and fulfilling the right to food and nutritional security for all.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): On 1 February, the countries of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) officially joined the launch of the International Year of Quinoa, and we asserted that quinoa played an important role in ensuring food and nutrition security, which we need and deserve. On that occasion, we reaffirmed the commitment of CELAC countries to participate in and contribute to the Year's activities while raising awareness of the nutritional qualities of that essential food.

We therefore align ourselves with what was said by the Ambassador of Cuba on behalf of CELAC, as well as by the Ambassador of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Quinoa, a unique vegetable food that contains all the essential amino acids and which is eaten by men and women of the Andes, can grow in extreme temperatures from -8° C to 38° C, which represents a significant contribution to humankind and the more than 800 million people who suffer from hunger, as well as to a world that faces the challenge of increasing the production of quality food to feed and nourish the populations of the world in a very difficult and complex context of climate change and food insecurity.

From the outset, the Argentine Republic, our President and the people of Argentina strongly supported the declaration of the International Year of Quinoa. In that regard, I would like to point to the establishment of a coordinating committee for the International Year of Quinoa, on which we have the honour to serve as a member.

Allow me to share with the Assembly a brief reflection as an Andean woman from Argentina. The history of quinoa can also be found in the centuries of colonial and neocolonial injustice, which tried without success to suppress the freedom and silence the culture of our peoples. In addition to feeding and nourishing, quinoa serves to illustrate and warn us against the negative and tragic consequences that humankind has suffered, and could suffer again, whenever cultural ambitions, political decisions and scientific paradigms that exclude and discriminate are established on the basis of overriding power as the only model of development in the name of a supposed civilizing superiority. While the peoples of the Andes had discovered the nutritional value of the quinoa grain more than 8,000 years ago, in 1551, during the period of colonialist concealment in Latin America, Pedro de Valdivia informed Emperor Charles I that "indians" in the Andean region were sowing corn, potatoes and something called quinoa. Knowledgeable people of that period made drawings of quinoa aboard their ships, erroneously depicting it as amaranth, which, as those who are familiar with it know, is a plant of low nutritional value found on Iberian peninsula. They therefore said that it had no value at all but that, if our native men and women ate it, it should be fed to animals in case they could get some benefit from it. But that was not the end, as the President of Bolivia said. Quinoa has gone from being useless to being inconvenient, if not from inconvenience to irreverence. That occurred once its cultivation was prohibited. Once its use was noted in the religious rituals of our Andean peoples, the grain became a sign of heresy and, therefore, just as was the case with our brothers, it had to be done away with.

Nevertheless, persistent and patient, our peoples of the high Andean regions, with its agriculture based on family farms and community solidarity, continued to produce quinoa for women's hands to knead into bread for the poor and to produce the soft drink called chicha for people thirsting for equality. Not long ago, when NASA, as part of its Controlled Ecological Life Support System project, officially recognized quinoa as a superfood that was found from Bolivia to Peru and from Colombia to Ecuador, Chile and Argentina, thousands and thousands of small farmers who cultivated that mother cereal, selflessly and without arrogance, were not surprised by the news. As then, we know that it is a question of our identity; that is why we know what quinoa is all about.

We would like to thank the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization for the support in contributing to ensure that all countries and peoples in their cultural diversity are at a common table for a humankind that is starving for justice and equality. It is not a question of quinoa against corn or corn against rice or rice against baobab. It is not one culture against another. We, the free peoples of the world, are determined to combat speculation in the food market and to eliminate the agricultural food subsidies of developed countries that distort the market and affect the development of developing countries. We are the countries of the world and we will defend all cultures and protect biodiversity.

In conclusion, in the Aymara language of our beloved brother the President of Bolivia, the word *pachacuti* means "turning point". As the poet says, the march of time unfolds and rescues beneficial traditions, making sure that the stones speak as the Andean mountains spoke. A time of change is not for looking on the past with nostalgia, but to learn to look at the present in a different way, as a future sown thousands of years ago.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): India is privileged to participate in today's global launch of the International Year of Quinoa 2013. We are equally privileged and honoured by the presence among us of His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, who has been the guiding spirit behind the initiative. We also deeply value the presence of Her Excellency Ms. Nadine Heredia de Humala, First Lady of Peru; His Excellency Mr. Rafael Roncagliolo Orbegoso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru; Her Excellency Ms. Silvana Vallejo, Vice-Minister for Rural Development of Ecuador; and His Excellency Mr. José Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Today's gathering here is testimony to the global recognition of quinoa, its growing popularity across continents and its potential and possibilities for the future.

In 2011, the Assembly adopted a resolution to celebrate 2013 as the International Year of Quinoa (resolution 66/221). My delegation lent its full support to that initiative. Today, as we gather here to celebrate quinoa, the golden grain of the Andes, let us remind ourselves of its unique qualities as a food source, a

cultural value and a versatile agricultural practice. In today's world, vulnerable to climate change, we are constantly challenged by our quest for food security. Quinoa offers a sustainable, healthful and nutritive dietary option.

It is the only plant food that contains all essential amino acids, vitamins and trace elements and, at the same time, is gluten-free. Its exceptionally high amino acid content enriches it with unique therapeutic properties — qualities that make it a superior nutritional option over other grains that form part of our daily food habits. As a rich source of protein, it holds immense nutritional and health value for populations in developing countries, especially those who depend upon legumes for their daily protein intake. With more than 1 billion people worldwide suffering from malnutrition, almost all of whom are in developing countries, what more affordable way is there than to promote protein- and vitamin-rich quinoa to tackle the challenge.

Quinoa is a highly adaptive crop that can grow in various agro-climatic zones. In its home in the Andean region, more than 3,000 genetically diverse varieties of quinoa are grown on the coast, in the alluvial plains, in the valleys and in the higher reaches of the mountains.

Today, quinoa's agronomic versatility has allowed it to travel far and wide. Farms in Asia, Europe and Africa are experimenting with quinoa production. Those efforts have met with appreciable success. In my country, quinoa cultivation is under trial in the Himalayan region and in the plains of northern India. Amaranth, a crop native also to the Americas with similar properties to quinoa, which grows widely in India, makes the trials more than promising.

With low input cost, quinoa production is highly cost-effective. As such, its potential to tackle hunger, disease and poverty and to meet the Millennium Development Goals in an affordable manner is truly immense. We look forward to the initiatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to promote and popularize quinoa, especially in those parts of the world where we are still a long way behind in providing people's basic needs.

Given its environmental adaptability and our need to identify crops that can best adjust to the impact of climate change, quinoa offers several possibilities for adaptation strategies. It can contribute to food and nutrition security in both developed and developing countries.

We must make greater use of science and technology to promote and propagate quinoa. At the same time, we must be willing to share its fruits for the greater public good. We fully appreciate the work being done by the FAO on that score and pledge India's committed support to its initiatives.

Feeding our people and providing them with sustenance is a challenge that we in developing countries grapple with daily. My Government's commitment to providing food security to every citizen of India remains resolute and unflinching. We are in the process of considering a food security bill that would guarantee subsidized grains to more than 600 million people in India, with special provisions for women and children.

For many of us here, the success of quinoa symbolizes the collective hope that we pin on sustainably harnessing our biodiversity resources to meet the needs of our present and future generations. It equally reinforces our faith in traditional knowledge and practices, as we search our daily lives for sustainable solutions.

In October 2012, India successfully hosted the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. At the meeting, we pledged to delve deep into our forests and wild fields and our countless but constrained biotic species to find new solutions to food security and sustainable livelihoods. We hope that our efforts to promote quinoa will go a long way in that common endeavour.

Quinoa is more than a crop. It represents the celebrated spirit of the Andean civilizations and their proud people, who have preserved their traditional knowledge and practices and taught us to how to live in harmony with nature. For centuries and over countless generations, they have preserved their wisdom and bequeathed to us their richness, colour and diversity of life. In today's world, as we strive to balance growth with social equity and environmental sustainability, they are our guiding lights.

President Morales Ayma, the Andes, the Andean people and the indigenous civilizations of the new world hold a special place in our hearts in India. Over centuries of intermingling, our two lands have exchanged ideas, values, flora and fauna. While they added potatoes, tomatoes, maize, papaya and more to our cuisine, we gave them coconut, sugarcane and mango. Now they give us and the world quinoa.

We deeply appreciate and support the plans drawn up by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to promote quinoa as part of the International Year programme and hope that such efforts will continue much beyond. We wish President Morales Ayma and Ms. Nadine Heredia de Humala every success as FAO Special Ambassadors for the International Year of Quinoa as they take the initiative forward. India remains committed to working with the global community to make the International Year of Quinoa a success.

Ms. King (Australia): The designation of this year as the International Year of Quinoa is an important event in the ongoing global fight against food insecurity and malnutrition. Australia supported the initiative from the beginning for that reason.

We congratulate the Government of Bolivia and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on their commitment to bringing the world's attention to the important role that quinoa can and must have in efforts to fight food insecurity. We commend the Governments of Peru and Ecuador for their very strong support. We also extend our congratulations to the President of Bolivia and the First Lady of Peru on their appointments as FAO Special Ambassadors for the International Year of Quinoa.

My own country, Australia, is a proud supporter of innovation in agriculture. We are committed to agricultural research and development, not just for domestic purposes but with the goal of helping to reduce poverty and of promoting food security and nutrition in developing countries. We do that through our bilateral aid programme, our active membership of the Commonwealth of Nations and the Group of 20. The establishment of the Australian International Food Security Centre in Australia and Kenya last year is yet another tangible expression of our ongoing commitment to strengthening research and cooperation in that area.

We all know that knowledge is not the exclusive domain of the scientist in the laboratory. The President of Bolivia eloquently made that point when he noted that quinoa has been grown in the Andean region for 7,000 years. We all have much to learn from the indigenous peoples of the world. We applaud the focus of the International Year of Quinoa in the respect that it accords to the knowledge and resilience strategies of indigenous peoples.

In a world besieged by drought and floods, with the urgent need to mitigate the impact of climate change, we must be innovative and must share knowledge and experience with one another.

Feeding the world's population of 9 billion people by 2050 will require an estimated 70 per cent increase in global food production and an almost 100 per cent increase in food production in developing countries. The rationale for increasing investment in agriculture is clear. While that may present us all with a huge challenge, it is not impossible as long as we take immediate and collective action. The International Year of Quinoa is an excellent example of such action. The Australian Government is committed to working with others to ensure that it is a success.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile is grateful for the convening of this meeting of the General Assembly to officially launch the International Year of Quinoa at the United Nations. We welcome the presence today of high-ranking officials from Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador and the United Nations system.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Cuba and Fiji on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of 77 and China, respectively.

The subject of agricultural development, food security and nutrition has become increasingly important to the work here at Headquarters, and rightly so. The numbers are well known: approximately 870 million people live with chronic malnutrition, most of them in developing countries, where an estimated 850 million, almost 15 per cent of the world's population, are malnourished. Only a few days ago the Second Committee and the Economic and Social Council held a special joint event on food security and nutrition. On that occasion two elements were repeatedly highlighted, that is, the importance of giving greater attention to the issue of nutrition and the impact of climate change on food security and agricultural development.

In that context, the launch of the International Year of Quinoa is even more relevant. As has been pointed out, quinoa — which has been preserved through the traditional knowledge and practices of the indigenous peoples of the Andes region — has high nutritional value, is rich in proteins and amino acids, and is extraordinarily adaptable to different soils, climates and altitudes. Its cultivation uses water efficiently, and it is tolerant of dry soil. The International Year

provides a unique opportunity to widely publicize this food and its properties, to support programmes that advance research and development for this crop and to promote its cultivation and consumption. The master plan for celebrating the International Year of Quinoa, to be implemented at the local, national and international levels, is a tool with enormous potential for achieving those goals, which we hope can rely on broad and essential support from the entire international community.

As a member of the International Committee for the Celebration of the International Year of Quinoa, together with Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, we reiterate our readiness to continue to work to ensure that this International Year is a catalyst for improving our peoples' life and nutrition. We would like to add our voice to the welcome given in the Hall to His Excellency the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and the First Lady of Peru as Food and Agriculture Organization Special Ambassadors for the International Year of Quinoa.

Before concluding, I would like to reflect on the broader theme of agricultural development, food security and nutrition, to which quinoa has the potential to make a great contribution. We firmly believe that the best way of achieving food security is by reducing poverty, strengthening growth and consolidating political and social stability. Food security is closely linked to the creation of job and income opportunities, which depends significantly on economic growth and social policies designed to provide adequate social protection mechanisms. Improving the availability of the products and job and income opportunities associated with more development, along with adequate social safety nets, will enable us to ensure food security for our peoples. In that context, we firmly believe that international trade plays a fundamental role in achieving food security, providing populations with both the physical access to food necessary for a balanced diet and economic access, through job and income opportunities.

It is crucial that we overcome the deadlock in the Doha Round and the agricultural protectionism that still persists. A multilateral, universal system of trade based on clear, equitable and non-discriminatory standards will promote agricultural and rural development in developing countries and contribute to global food security.

Mr. Ragaglini (Italy): Italy is pleased to participate in this plenary meeting of the General Assembly and to join in the celebration of the launch of the International Year of Quinoa. We welcome the presence here today of the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, and recognize his leading role in this initiative. We would also like to congratulate him and the First Lady of Peru, Ms. Nadine Heredia de Humala, on their appointments as Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Special Ambassadors for the International Year of Quinoa.

Italy values the dialogue being held at the United Nations on the role that natural foods such as quinoa can play in providing an adequate standard of nutrition, promoting food security, eradicating poverty, preserving biodiversity and maintaining cultural traditions. The availability of genuinely high-quality agricultural foodstuffs is among society's fundamental needs. Ensuring healthful and high-quality nutrition helps to fight hunger and malnutrition, reduce child mortality, prevent non-communicable diseases and eradicate pandemic diseases. The production and consumption of quality food is closely intertwined with the farming traditions of local communities, developed over centuries, and with the goal of sustainable land management.

High-quality food also enhances the values of a cultural and ethnic heritage, as expressed in culinary traditions. A culture of food is an integral part of Italy's history. At the same time, food security and nutrition have traditionally been high priorities for our foreign policy and cooperation in development activity. For that reason we welcomed the recent initiative of the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee to hold a joint special event on food security and nutrition.

Thanks to the presence in Rome of the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, it is the city where these global issues are most intensely debated at the multilateral level. I would like to take this opportunity to note that Italy is preparing to host the 2015 World Expo in Milan, with the theme of "Feeding the planet. Energy for life". The exhibition will provide an extraordinary platform on which to display tradition, creativity and innovation in the food sector, as well as to promote research, technology and business practices along the entire supply chain

for improving the nutritional value, conservation and distribution of food. To date, the Milan Expo expects more than 120 confirmed international participants, including the United Nations, with the FAO as its lead organization.

We believe that the International Year of Quinoa 2013, together with other initiatives pertaining to food security and nutrition, such as Scaling Up Nutrition and the Zero Hunger Challenge, may provide important synergies with the theme of the 2015 World Expo. We also see many points of contact between the theme of the Expo and the ongoing processes on sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda. Italy stands ready to collaborate with the United Nations and its agencies, funds and programmes and with all Member States, including the main promoters of the International Year of Quinoa, to fully exploit those opportunities.

Let me conclude by welcoming again the launch of the International Year of Quinoa and by expressing our best wishes for its successful implementation.

Ms. Lee (New Zealand): With close to 1 billion people suffering from malnutrition, including one third of all children in the developing world, and with rapid population growth, soaring food prices and climate change threatening to intensify those challenges, the imperative to identify viable options for sustainable agricultural production and food security, particularly in the developing world, has never been greater. New Zealand was therefore pleased to lend its support to the initiative instigated under the leadership of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to convene today's meeting to mark the launch of the International Year of Quinoa.

Sometimes the path to resolving the challenges of the future lies through the past, and sometimes the key to unlocking contemporary innovation is found in the most ancient wisdom. New Zealand pays tribute to the role played by the Andean indigenous people, the original agricultural innovators and the living embodiment of the principles of sustainable development, in fostering and preserving quinoa as a versatile and highly nutritious food source for present and future generations.

Today's launch of the International Year of Quinoa highlights the exceptional nutritional and agricultural benefits of the qualities of the golden grain. But it also underlines the broader need to consider innovative ways in which agricultural production and productivity can be sustainably increased to meet growing global demand and in which food security and nutrition might be enhanced for the one in seven members of the global community who currently go hungry.

There is much that we can learn from each other as we seek to meet those challenges. The versatility and high nutritional value of quinoa make it a promising option for many communities, particularly for those that do not have ready access to alternative protein sources.

Much more can and must be done to achieve our shared goal of eliminating hunger and malnutrition. As others have said before me today, we need fairer global rules for trade in agricultural products to ensure that farmers in developing countries can compete on a level playing field. We need improved access by such farmers to credit and to relevant information and technology. We need investment in relevant infrastructure and in enhanced distribution systems. And we need to develop agricultural production systems resilient enough to withstand the impacts of climate change.

The challenge is vast, but we are very pleased to be associated with today's launch, which we hope can make a practical contribution to meeting that challenge over the coming year and beyond.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and by the representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, we want to congratulate our brother and the leader of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, President Evo Morales Ayma, who has undeniably contributed, with his prophetic voice, to the care and love needed by Mother Earth, which is the only way to preserve humankind. Similarly, we pay tribute to the First Lady of the Republic of Peru, Ms. Nadine Heredia de Humala, and Mr. José Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Scientific evidence confirms that quinoa is not only a natural food with high nutritional value, it also represents a significant contribution to achieving food security and nutrition. When considering the launch of the International Year of Quinoa, 2013, we realize that

we are thinking of the 870 million people throughout the world who are suffering from hunger. According to the FAO, one out of every eight people goes to bed hungry every night. Therefore, we recognize that humankind's challenge to eradicate hunger and poverty remains increasingly urgent. We cannot stand idly by in the face of that alarming reality. We are also concerned by, and we need to prepare ourselves even more for, the negative impacts of climate change, drought and the constant El Niño and La Niña phenomena. Meanwhile, we continue with the same pillaging model of production and consumption, which is damaging our common home, Mother Earth, and all its gifts, which enable our survival as the human species.

Given those challenging circumstances, it is crucial to find solutions and consider new proposals. The launch of the International Year of Quinoa is exactly that — a gift from Mother Earth. The indigenous Andean peoples have made quinoa into an alternative, strategic and powerful food that can contribute to food and nutrition sovereignty and security for humankind, as well as improve the quality of life of our peoples and end the hunger of the 870 million people who go hungry every day. We just have to use the knowledge of the indigenous Andean peoples and make quinoa part of our daily diets, as was done with Mesoamerican corn, which is also a gift from Mother Earth and which has become a fundamental component of the global diet.

According to FAO reports, quinoa contains extraordinary characteristics of adaptability to various ecological and weather conditions. Similarly, quinoa production makes it possible to preserve the traditional agricultural production system while using methods that respect the environment and protect Mother Earth and human health. Therefore, we must increase awareness about the use of quinoa to fight hunger.

In order to achieve a zero-hunger world, we also need to encourage microcredit; the economic empowerment of the poorest and women; and the participation of small and medium-sized businesses under a community- and family-based economy, including the participation of community-based organizations. We also need to support the efforts of our Governments to eradicate poverty and hunger. That is the experience we are living through in our country, and we can say we are doing it steadily and with certain success. We would like to thank Director-General Graziano da Silva and to acknowledge what the FAO is doing to support our President and people. We thank him and the FAO for the progress that Nicaragua has made in eradicating poverty.

As daughters and sons of corn, we welcome and pay tribute to the indigenous people of the Andes and their quinoa.

Mr. De Vega (Philippines): It is an honour for the people and Government of the Republic of the Philippines to extend our warmest greetings and sincere congratulations to the people and Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and to all quinoa-producing countries on today's global launch of the International Year of Quinoa, 2013.

The Philippines aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, to which I will add a brief statement of our own.

As we approach the 2015 deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, it remains imperative that the world continue to tackle the biggest issues of the day, including poverty eradication and food security. In developed and developing countries alike, many are searching for new solutions and discoveries to help enhance food security and people's health. Yet, in truth, there may be no need to uncover such magic solutions when our peoples are already cultivating healthful foods, and all that is needed is to promote awareness of them. Therefore, we now devote our attention to the important nutritional and health value of quinoa.

In the Philippines' view, the promotion of quinoa is in itself a demonstration of how a global undertaking involving a food crop can promote and integrate the three pillars of sustainable development. This International Year should improve the livelihoods of many indigenous farmers in Bolivia and other parts of the Americas and around the world, and thus we are advancing the economic pillar. We help preserve and honour their traditional knowledge and practices and promote a crop with great health benefits for consumers, and thus we advance the social pillar. And we enhance the development of a sustainable agricultural practice that is in harmony with nature, and thus we promote the environmental pillar.

President Morales Ayma mentioned the difficulty of getting the resolution to launch this event adopted (resolution 66/221). Today also gives us an opportunity to remind our friends around the world that in 2011, at

the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, another resolution on an International Year was adopted under the agenda item of agricultural development and food security. That was resolution 66/222, introduced by the Philippines, declaring 2014 the International Year of Family Farming. We were honoured to count Bolivia, Peru and many other countries that sponsored the resolution on the International Year of Quinoa among the sponsors of our own resolution, and we thank them again for their support.

Indeed, the quinoa crop and the concept of family farming are mutually complementary in that their promotion is intended to support the same beneficiaries. The Philippines aims to support the special needs of smallholder farming, including women farmers. Many of the producers of quinoa in the Andes and elsewhere undoubtedly fall into the same category. The successful implementation of the International Year of Quinoa should therefore pave the way, we hope, for similar success with the International Year of Family Farming 2014. And so in much the same way that today we welcome the global launch of the International Year of Quinoa for 2013, we look forward to welcoming the Assembly to what we hope will be a similarly successful event when we launch the International Year of Family Farming next year.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

Once again, we extend to our friends from the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Republic of Peru, the Republic of Ecuador and other quinoa-producing countries our sincere congratulations and best wishes for the celebration of the International Year of Quinoa. Before concluding, I hope that we can share this food together at a common table.

(*spoke in English*)

We greatly appreciate the offering of these delicious samples of quinoa.

Mr. Nofukuka (South Africa): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

I would like to thank the President for organizing this meeting to mark the global launch of the International Year of Quinoa, 2013.

We owe gratitude to the diverse cultural values that over the years have preserved indigenous traditional knowledge and protected quinoa in its natural form, so that we will be able to use it as nutritious food for generations to come. We believe that quinoa's nutritional value can benefit our societies and that it can be used to address the challenges of poverty eradication and food security that we face.

It is clear that most developing countries will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially those targeting poverty and hunger. In that regard, we believe that this meeting should help accelerate progress, further strengthen cooperation and create action-oriented strategies for improving nutrition, particularly for women and children, and for the overall attainment of the MDGs by 2015. In that context, financial and technical resources should be accessible, coordinated and predictable in order to accelerate efforts towards ensuring the practical realization of the right to food. Moreover, the role of specialized United Nations agencies such as the World Intellectual Property Organization and their contribution towards the development agenda are critical for attaining the MDGs, especially in the context of MDG 8, on the global partnership for development.

We commend the efforts of United Nations agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme, UNICEF and partners, as well as the substantive contribution that has been made by the private sector and civil society, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in taking all possible steps to address the challenges of poverty and hunger. We also commend the training of unskilled workers, which has made a difference as such workers have become self-sustaining, and therefore also able to make a positive contribution to the economic growth of their countries. Such training of unskilled workers is essential for rural development.

According to the FAO, our planet is capable of producing enough food to feed everyone, worldwide. But people are still suffering from serious malnutrition, and UNICEF has indicated that every year one third of all children die before reaching the age of 5, due to hunger-related illnesses. That situation could have been avoided. We acknowledge the progress made in combating extreme poverty and hunger worldwide. However, the situation in developing countries is severe and requires attention, as the number of people living in poverty is increasing, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The situation is made worse by the devastating

impact of climate change and the food crisis, among other things.

Let me remind the Assembly of our collective responsibility to ensure that every human being has the right to access safe, affordable and nutritious food as part of the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger. We should ask ourselves how far we have gone in ensuring that such freedoms and rights are promoted and protected so that they can be enjoyed by everyone, as guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Right to Development.

We will not win the battle against extreme poverty and hunger unless we take the necessary measures to address the root causes. In that regard, we understand that successful poverty-reduction strategies include four strategies.

First, with regard to employment creation and decent work, targeting vulnerable youth and women, an environment conducive to promoting entrepreneurship is vital, particularly in addressing youth unemployment. Secondly, we must have access to education, science and technology, health care, safe drinking water and sanitation. Thirdly, there must be a provision of social-protection floors to poor societies. Fourthly, we must support agricultural and rural development and food production by supporting small-scale irrigation and water management technologies to reduce vulnerability to droughts.

We need to ensure the elimination of protectionism on agricultural products that jeopardize equitable market access for developing States, with its resulting impact on food security.

Increasing global climate-change events continue to have a huge impact on, and cost for, developing countries. It is our wish that we build on the gains accrued from United Nations conferences on climate change in order to join hands to save the planet, especially small island developing States and other countries at risk, and to preserve agrobiodiversity. International cooperation could assist developing countries in protecting and preserving biodiversity.

In conclusion, in order to ensure the practical realization of the right to food, this debate should be translated into a tangible outcome. We therefore recommend that the Secretary-General coordinates with regional bodies, such as the African Union, to ensure the distribution of quinoa species so that all countries may realize its benefit as a nutritious crop. In the context of sharing best practices, we recommend the furtherance of research, both national and international levels, on the adaptation of quinoa.

Let us strengthen our global partnership for sustainable development and take every necessary step to achieve the eradication of poverty and hunger, especially in Africa. That challenge requires fulfilling our collective responsibilities.

Mr. Escalona Ojeda (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to recognize and pay tribute to our brother the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and to Minister for Foreign Affairs Choquehuanca Céspedes, who are present at this meeting. I would also like to acknowledge Ms. Nadine Heredia Humala, First Lady of the Republic of Peru.

As everyone has mentioned, we are today taking part in something of great significance. Humankind and the planet must pay an important debt of gratitude to the Plurinational State of Bolivia and its President, a leader from South America and the world, Mr. Evo Morales Ayma. Environmental issues and the defence of life in all its forms have taken on new dimensions since President Morales Ayma took responsibility for the future of the Bolivian nation. We are particularly proud of the fact that a member of the first communities of our continent can be here today to address the world in the name of all our peoples and in the name of those who have been abandoned — the ruled out, the passed over, the invisible and the dispossessed — and whom official history has ignored. I am not referring only to human beings, but to all natural beings, such as quinoa, coca and great food heritage and vast biodiversity, which, treated as a commodity, are being exploited and destroyed.

Today we are revindicating not only a plant or seed, but a culture of coexistence among human beings and nature and a culture of family farming and communal, local and regional farms linked to local and regional markets, not transnational markets. Those local markets are markets of people, not anonymous ones, where relationships are not between things but between people and the goods that come from nature — not something merely placed on market shelves. Those fruits have personality, which is why local markets are not subject to the laws of transnational markets.

Quinoa stands in contrast with genetically modified products. No one has to pay on a patent to sow quinoa; no one has to account to anyone else to plant it. Quinoa requires only permission from Nature herself and all the spirits of the universe. Quinoa can break with the geopolitics of food, as referred to by Henry Kissinger, "Control oil and you control nations; control food and you control the people".

As I have already underscored, such geopolitics is being implemented through genetically modified products and the futures markets. Each country is of course sovereign and can do what it likes, but I mention genetically modified products because they are the exclusive monopoly of the large food multinationals. Quinoa cannot be monopolized because of the qualities that have been described. It can be cultivated anywhere. It does not need special chemical fertilizers or particular temperatures. It merely requires the will and the spirit to sow it and harvest it.

Those that monopolize the food markets speculate on the futures markets. That is another way to implement food geopolitics and to control what people eat in order to dominate them. The futures markets have become one of the main causes of hunger with the increase in food prices. Quinoa must overcome the threat of international monopoly and market manipulation, which buys up harvests and controls their price on the markets. Quinoa provides the prospect of liberation and freedom. As President Evo Morales Ayma said, it is a 7,000-year-old legacy that was there then and is here today. It can provide not only food security but also food independence, national sovereignty and the independence to think and to act.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 14.

Members are reminded that a special ceremony to appoint the Special Ambassadors for the International Year of Quinoa of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations will be held here in the Hall immediately following the adjournment of this meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.65

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

65th plenary meeting
Thursday, 21 February 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Román-Morey (Peru), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 134 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/67/693/Add.2, A/67/693/Add.3, A/67/693/Add.4 and A/67/693/Add.5)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to documents A/67/693/Add.2 to Add.5, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in document A/67/693/Add.1, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Grenada and Kyrgyzstan have made the payments necessary to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in these documents?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 14 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Draft resolution (A/67/L.55)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that the Assembly considered agenda item 14, jointly with agenda item 9, "Report of the Economic and Social Council", at its 28th plenary meeting, on 22 October 2012.

Members will also recall that, under agenda item 14, the Assembly adopted resolution 67/18 at its 43rd plenary meeting, on 28 November 2012, and marked the global launch of the International Year of Quinoa at its 64th plenary meeting on 20 February 2013.

I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya to introduce draft resolution A/67/L.55.

Ms. Muli (Kenya): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/67/L.55, entitled "Organization of the special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014".

Twenty years ago, representatives of Member States, civil society, academics and the private sector gathered together in Cairo and adopted the most forward-looking document in the world at that time. It trail-blazed and set the stage for other international conferences, such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which built upon its success. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development is as relevant today as it was then.

Two years ago, my delegation was honoured and proud to have facilitated resolution 65/234, which extended the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its key actions beyond 2014. As members may recall,

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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the resolution was adopted by the General Assembly by consensus. We are similarly honoured and proud to have facilitated the current organizational draft resolution, which sets out the modalities for the holding of the special session.

My delegation wants to sincerely thank all the delegations that participated in the consultations on the present draft resolution. I thank them for their hard work and the flexibility they demonstrated. We appreciate the long hours that it took to arrive at this consensus text. While it is not a perfect document for any specific delegation, it reflects the various compromise positions that were expressed by different delegations.

This organizational draft resolution has several strong points. First, the high-level special session will be held on 22 September 2014. That is about the time that the high-level segment of the general debate will be held. If it were held at another time, it would have burdened delegations by requiring them to return to New York to attend the special session.

Secondly, Member States will have the opportunity to recommit themselves to the ICPD Programme of Action and its key actions at the highest level, just as was done in Cairo 19 years ago.

Thirdly, there will also be wider participation by Member States. The high-level special session will be held over a period of eight hours. With the extended time period, more delegations will have the opportunity to participate.

Fourthly, there will be participation by civil society. The participation of non-governmental organizations will be based on the principle of equitable geographical representation, thereby giving each geographical region an equal chance to be represented at the special session.

The Commission for Population and Development has also been given a special place in the preparations leading up to the special session. Although there will be no outcome during the high-level special session, the Commission's forty-seventh session, in 2014, will be open-ended, giving an opportunity to all Member States to participate on an equal footing in the envisaged interactive discussion and preparations for the special session.

Finally, I would like to most profoundly thank the secretariat of the consultations, whose staff was drawn from United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Population Division. They worked tirelessly to provide answers and explanations to delegations. They also provided clarifications on the various proposals and ensured the timely distribution of the draft texts and other documents. That work would have been much more difficult without them. I look forward to the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/67/L.55.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): In connection with draft resolution A/67/L.55, entitled "Organization of the Special Session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014", I wish to put on the record the following statement of financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

In paragraphs 1 and 4 (a) of draft resolution A/67/L.55, the General Assembly would decide that the special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development will be held on 22 September 2014 in New York, in the most efficient and cost-effective manner, and that the special session will be composed of plenary meetings on 22 September 2014 from 1 to 9 p.m.

The special session of the General Assembly would be composed of one day and three meetings in all six languages, with all three meetings being proposed for the afternoon of 22 September 2014, from 1 to 9 p.m. Therefore, the special session will constitute an addition of three meetings, with interpretation and verbatim records in all six languages, to the workload of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. That would constitute an additional requirement in the amount of $144,200 for meetings in 2014. Furthermore, additional documentation would be required, comprising 121 pages of pre-session documentation in all six official languages in 2014. That would constitute an additional requirement in the amount of $236,600 for documentation services in 2014.

Consequently, additional requirements of $380,800 for the biennium 2014-2015 would arise under section 2, "General Assembly and Economic and Social Council

affairs and conference management", for meeting servicing and documentation. Accordingly, should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/67/L.55, additional resources in the amount of $380,800 would be required under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 under section 2, "General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management". That would require additional appropriations of $380,800 to be included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of position, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Nemroff (United States of America): The United States would first like to thank the Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya, Ambassador Koki Muli, for her remarks this morning. We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Kenya, Ambassador Macharia Kamau, and the very capable Mr. John Mosoti for their tireless efforts in facilitating the discussions of the modalities of the special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014.

The United States is pleased to join the consensus on draft resolution A/67/L.55. We strongly support the special session of the General Assembly, which will assess progress to date on meeting the goals outlined in the 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

The ICPD, along with its five- and 10-year reviews and in many resolutions since 1994, provides the foundation for our global efforts to provide women and young people with access to sexual and reproductive health services, including modern forms of contraception. The ICPD mandate is based on support for reproductive rights, which are essential to empowering women and ultimately to the international community's ability to reach our global development goals.

Throughout negotiations on the present draft resolution, we have underscored the important role that non-governmental and civil society organizations, including those that do not have consultative status in the Economic and Social Council, should play through their participation in the special session. The special session should be open to all concerned parties, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have subject-matter expertise.

Non-governmental and civil society organizations, academic institutions and private-sector organizations worldwide play a crucial role in population issues, including by advocating on behalf of women's reproductive rights and by implementing programmes to assist women. Such programmes include reducing maternal mortality and morbidity and enhancing the ability of women to make decisions for themselves about when and if to have children. Their expertise is essential to the success of the special session.

The process of admission for civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations, to participate in the special session must be completely transparent. Any concerns with an NGO's potential participation in the special session need to be addressed openly and transparently, not behind closed doors. Non-governmental organizations must not be denied access to United Nations forums for political reasons.

In that regard, we understand paragraph 4 (d) and footnote 2 of the draft resolution to mean that the list of NGOs and other potential participants will be sent to the General Assembly for its consideration, where Member States will evaluate any possible objections made by other States. The special session will have a far greater value if all relevant concerned civil society voices are heard without objection.

Each event and conference is a little different, so the language in the draft resolution concerning civil society participation should not be seen as a cookie-cutter precedent for the next resolution. We should continue our efforts to develop and refine clear and transparent procedures to facilitate the full participation of NGOs in high-level meetings. As we gain experience with various formulas, we expect to refine and develop the future language on that topic to provide for civil society access more clearly.

The United States looks forward to continued cooperation to make the special session a forward-looking and productive session.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.55.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, Panama has become a sponsor of draft resolution A/67/L.55.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/67/L.55?

Draft resolution A/67/L.55 was adopted (resolution 67/250).

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before giving the floor to the speakers in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. De Léon Huerta (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico attaches great importance to resolution 67/250, as it concerns a topic that is relevant to the international community, namely, the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014. We are certain that the special session of the General Assembly will enable States to reaffirm at the highest political level their commitment to implementing and launching the Cairo Programme of Action.

One of the fundamental issues in organizing special sessions of the General Assembly is that of the participation of civil society and non-governmental organizations. They have played a critical role in promoting the goals of the Cairo Programme of Action.

The delegation of Mexico once again wishes to reiterate its commitment to the broadest possible participation of civil society representatives as essential stakeholders in our deliberations. For that reason, we regret the introduction, in paragraph 4 (d) of the resolution, of the view seeking to limit the participation of such organizations, submitting it solely to the principle of non-objection by Member States without, at the same time, respecting the crucial principle of due process. Moreover, the supposed right of veto by States regarding the participation of certain organizations is professed to be acknowledged, ignoring the fact that it is for the General Assembly to make such a decision.

During the informal consultations, we stated our preference for the special session not to be held on the same date as the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples in 2014 in order to avoid possible logistical complications. We hope, however, that the agreement reached for the first plenary meeting of the session to begin at the conclusion of the opening of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples will enable both events, to which we attach the highest priority, to take place in a coordinated way.

Finally, we would like to thank the delegation of Kenya for the very efficient way in which it led the negotiations on the resolution and the United Nations Population Fund for its work in the context of marking the twentieth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is committed to the effective implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014. We attach particular importance to next year's special session of the General Assembly to review the status of the implementation of the ICPD.

We welcome the consensus adoption of resolution 67/250 with regard to that session. We note the work of the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations in helping to coordinate the process for reaching agreement on the resolution.

By adopting the resolution, it is clearly established that the proceedings of the special session shall be governed by the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. We believe that the participation and activities of representatives of non-governmental organizations, as set out in paragraphs 4 (c) and (d) of the resolution, will take place without prejudice to the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. The President of the General Assembly drawing up the list of representatives of non-governmental organizations will be undertaken in accordance with the principle of non-objection.

In general, we support the inclusion of non-governmental organizations in the work of the United Nations in the social and economic fields. The Russian delegation believes that that should take place without prejudice to the intergovernmental nature of the Organization and its principal bodies.

Mrs. Furman (Israel): The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo, was a groundbreaking event in the history of population and development, as well as of women's rights. The ICPD Programme of Action endorsed a new strategy that emphasized the many linkages between population and development and focused on the needs of individual women and men. It has had a profound impact on people around the world in both developed and developing countries.

Israel attaches great importance to the ICPD and therefore joined the consensus on resolution 67/250. However, I would like to express my delegation's disappointment that during the informal consultations some States insisted on limiting civil society participation at the special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014.

Israel strongly believes that the special session should be a platform for all relevant stakeholders to express their views and exchange best practices. Non-governmental organizations operate on the ground in all corners of the world and are crucial players in the promotion and implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD.

Israel appreciates the engagement and leadership of the facilitator, Ambassador Kamau of Kenya, as well as the tremendous efforts made by our colleague, John Mosoti, and the rest of the team. We would like to thank the facilitator for his constructiveness and creativity, especially with regard to paragraph 4 (d) of the resolution on civil society participation.

However, we are deeply concerned that the participation of civil society and other important stakeholders will be considered on a non-objection basis, contravening the basic principles of due process, fairness, transparency and accountability. As we emphasized throughout the negotiation process, the final decision of civil society participation rests with the General Assembly, and that is how we interpret paragraph 4 (d).

We call on all Member States to respect the important role of all stakeholders, and we sincerely hope that everyone who is interested and engaged in the topic of population and development will be able to join us in September 2014.

Ms. Hentic (Canada): Let me take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Koki Muli, Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya, for her very constructive opening remarks.

Canada supports the important work of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and is pleased that we could reach consensus on the resolution. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Kenya for the remarkable facilitation role it played during the negotiation process. As I participated personally in those long negotiations, allow me to warmly thank Ambassador Kamau and my dear colleague John Mosoti for their relentless efforts to get to a consensus text of resolution 67/250.

Canada is disappointed that the General Assembly has been slowly moving away from its past practice in regard to the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in United Nations events, such as the special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the ICPD beyond 2014. While Canada agrees that Member States be consulted in the selection process for NGOs without consultative status in the Economic and Social Council, Canada also believes that NGOs should participate in United Nations events on the basis of their relevance to the subject matter under consideration at the event.

The language in paragraph 4 (d) of resolution 67/250 is still based on an objection. Past practice allowed for Member States' involvement in the election process, while also ensuring that NGOs' relevance was the primary criterion for their prospective participation. As Canada believes that this balance is critical, we regret that such balance is not adequately reflected in the resolution before us.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position following the adoption of resolution 67/250.

I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Devanlay (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and

Herzegovina; and the European Free Trade Agreement country Norway, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We would like to extend our thanks and deep appreciation to Ambassador Kamau and to our dear colleague John Mosoti from the Mission of Kenya to the United Nations, who personally made tireless efforts to facilitate the discussions on resolution 67/250, and for their outstanding work in conducting the process of consultations in a very open and transparent manner.

First, the European Union and its member States want to unambiguously reaffirm their commitment to the full implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its review conferences. We wish to stress the importance we attach to the special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up of the ICPD beyond 2014.

The ICPD review process is a unique way of deepening our appreciation of the importance of the ICPD agenda. The ICPD in Cairo in 1994 was a ground-breaking event; placing human rights, individuals and communities at the centre of population and development issues represented a paradigm shift in development policy. The special session of the General Assembly, now scheduled for the afternoon of 22 September 2014, will also come at a key moment of our discussions on the post-2015 United Nations development agenda.

We are also looking forward to fruitful discussions during the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development in April 2014, which will be open-ended in order to ensure maximum engagement and ownership of all stakeholders ahead of the special session.

However, when discussing this resolution's modalities, we were deeply disappointed by the reluctance shown by some Member States to ensure the full participation of civil society representatives at the special session and to provide transparency in the way that relevant non-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) would be allowed to participate in the session.

We firmly believe that maintaining a strong and open dialogue with genuine and relevant civil society groups should be a key element in the high-level discussion of the ICPD. For that reason, throughout the consultations on the resolution we consistently advocated, as we have in other instances, that the process of admission of NGOs to participate in the special session should be completely transparent and should allow for the full involvement of the General Assembly. Therefore, our interpretation of paragraph 4 (d) of resolution 67/250 is that, within the General Assembly, Member States will be able to examine and challenge possible objections made by other States to the presence of civil society representatives or specific NGOs in an open and transparent fashion.

We hope that a more constructive approach will be shown by all Member States in future discussions on civil society participation at the United Nations, and the European Union and its member States will remain strongly committed in ensuring an improved, more open and more transparent process for the selection of NGO participation in specific United Nations meetings. We will continue to stay actively engaged in debates on population and development and look forward to successful and fully inclusive discussions during the special session.

Mr. Fuchs (Switzerland): Switzerland would like to commend the facilitators, Ambassador Kamau and Mr. John Mosoti from the Mission of Kenya to the United Nations, for their unwavering efforts in providing guidance in the consultations on resolution 67/250 and leading it to a sound consensus.

Switzerland welcomes the purpose of the resolution, and we reaffirm our commitment to the full implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and of the ongoing review process, including its review conferences. The special session to be held on 22 September 2014 will give key momentum to renewing political will to promote the fundamental principles on population and development agreed to by Governments at the International Conference in Cairo in 1994. We further welcome the fact that the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development in April 2014 will be open-ended in order to ensure maximum inclusiveness of all relevant stakeholders.

With regard to inclusive stakeholder participation at the special session itself, however, we are concerned about the reluctance to fully support the principles of transparency and due process in the selection of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) without

accreditation in the Economic and Social Council and the wider civil society. In Switzerland's view, civil society stakeholders contribute valuable perspectives on matters relating to population and development and should therefore be accorded a strong and appropriate role in the ICPD special session of 2014.

Throughout the consultation process on the modality resolution, Switzerland advocated a transparent and open process in the selection of relevant NGOs and civil society — a process that accords a role in the consultation of the list proposed by the President of the General Assembly, not only to the individual Member States but to the General Assembly itself, to take a role in the decision-making process.

We acknowledge that, with the formulation attained in the resolution, a step in the right direction towards transparency and due process — values that are dear to Switzerland — has been taken. In that sense, Switzerland understands the meaning of the language in paragraph 4 (d) as follows. After the consultation of Member States on the proposed NGOs in civil society stakeholders, the General Assembly will have the possibility to consider the list of relevant stakeholders and possible objections made by Member States. We understand that the General Assembly is the legitimate body to take the final decision on the participation of relevant stakeholders in the ICPD special session.

Switzerland will maintain its commitment to supporting the important role we attach to NGOs and the wider civil society in general and on this particular matter. Switzerland will therefore continue to engage in dialogue with Member States in developing appropriate standards in that regard.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 14.

Agenda item 110 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(c) Election of five members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that, in accordance with paragraphs 4 (a) to (e) of resolution 60/180, of 20 December 2005, the Organizational Committee shall comprise seven members of the Security Council, including five permanent members; seven members of the Economic and Social Council, elected from regional groups; five top providers of assessed contributions to United Nations budgets and of voluntary contributions to United Nations funds, programmes and agencies, including a standing peacebuilding fund; five top providers of military personnel and civilian police to United Nations missions; and seven additional members elected by the General Assembly, giving due consideration to representation from all regional groups in the overall composition of the Committee.

Members will recall that, at its 62nd plenary meeting, on 24 December 2012, the General Assembly elected Brazil, Malaysia and Peru as members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission for a two-year term of office, beginning on 1 January 2013. Regarding candidatures for the two seats, I should like to inform members that the Group of African States has endorsed Kenya and South Africa.

Members will recall that in resolution 60/261, the General Assembly decided that the rules of procedure and established practice of the Assembly for the election of members of its subsidiary bodies shall apply to its election of members of the Committee. For this election, rules 92 and 94 shall be applicable. Accordingly, the election will be held by secret ballot and there will be no nominations.

However, I should like to recall paragraph 16 of decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election. In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on that basis?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Since the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled, may I take it that the General Assembly decides to elect Kenya and South Africa as members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission for a two-year term of office, beginning on 1 January 2013?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate Kenya and South Africa on their election

as members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 110?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 111 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(f) Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences

Note by the Secretary-General (A/67/107)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that, at its 62nd plenary meeting, on 24 December 2012, the General Assembly took note of the President's appointment of Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal as members of the Committee on Conferences for a period of three years, beginning on 1 January 2013 and ending on 31 December 2015. Members will also recall that there remains one seat to be filled from among the Asia-Pacific States, two seats from among the Latin American and Caribbean States, one seat to be filled from among the Eastern European States, and one seat to be filled from among the Western European and other States for a period of three years, beginning 1 January 2013.

Members will also recall that, at the sixty-sixth session of the Assembly, one seat from among the Asia-Pacific States and one seat from among the Latin American and Caribbean States remained to be filled. On the recommendation of the Chair of the Group of Asia-Pacific States, Eastern European States and the Western European and other States, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq and Israel have been appointed members of the Committee on Conferences for the period beginning on 21 February 2013 and ending on 31 December 2015; and Sri Lanka has been appointed for the period beginning on 21 February 2013 and ending on 31 December 2014.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of these appointments?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that one seat from among the Latin American and Caribbean States remains vacant for a period beginning on the date of appointment and ending on 31 December 2015.

Members will further recall that one seat, also from among the Latin American and Caribbean States, has remained vacant since the sixty-sixth session, for a period beginning on the date of appointment and ending on 31 December 2014. I urge that regional group to submit its candidature as soon as possible.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (f) of agenda item 111.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.66

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

66th plenary meeting
Friday, 8 March 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Agenda item 134 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/67/693/Add.6, A/67/693/Add.7 and A/67/693/Add.8)

The Acting President: I should like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to documents A/67/693/Add.6 to Add.8, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in document A/67/693/Add.5, Dominica, Saint Lucia, Seychelles and the Sudan have made the payments necessary to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in those documents?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The Acting President: The Assembly now have before it a report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (a) of agenda item 111, entitled "Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions" (A/67/559/Add.1). In order for the Assembly to consider the report of the Fifth Committee under that sub-item, it will be necessary to reopen the consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 111. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 111 and proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 111 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(a) Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/67/559/Add.1)

The Acting President: In paragraph 3 of its report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint Mr. Vinay Kumar of India as a member of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for a term of office beginning 8 March 2013 and ending on 31 December 2013. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint Mr. Vinay Kumar of India as a member of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for a term of office beginning 8 March 2013 and ending on 31 December 2013?

It was so decided.

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13-25387 (E)

Please recycle

The Acting President: May I also take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 111?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.67

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

67th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 13 March 2013, 4 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 4.15 p.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

The President: Before we proceed to the item on our agenda, it is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who passed away on 5 March 2013.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I request the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to convey our condolences to the Government and the people of Venezuela and to the bereaved family of President Chávez Frías.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The President: It was with great sadness that I learned of the passing of His Excellency Mr. Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. On behalf of the General Assembly, and in my own name, allow me to offer my deepest condolences to his bereaved family and friends, the Government and the people of Venezuela, as well as to his many admirers throughout Latin America, the Caribbean and the rest of the world.

On this solemn occasion, it is my hope that we can put aside any personal or political differences and come together to pay our respects.

History will no doubt remember President Chávez Frías, who was a charismatic leader whose progressive policies brought Venezuela's poverty rate down from over 70 per cent at the close of the twentieth century to around 20 per cent today. Throughout his term in office, he remained committed to the cause of social justice, working hard to improve the lives of Venezuelans, especially the most underprivileged among them. Under his strong leadership, Venezuela made great strides towards fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals, to the lasting benefit of a great and proud nation.

He was a man who came from humble beginnings, brought up in a mud-floor house on the cattle-ranching plains of Barinas state. That helped him better understand and feel the pain and privations of ordinary Venezuelans. While he was a great advocate of the sovereignty of his country, President Chávez Frías was also a strong proponent of the revitalization of the United Nations. Throughout his political career, he remained a vocal advocate of the global South and a firm believer in the potential of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 in helping to uplift the developing world. He was also a driving force behind efforts to deepen Latin American and Caribbean integration. That led President Chávez Frías to be actively involved in establishing or strengthening organizations such as Petrosur, Petrocaribe, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Union of South

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13-25742 (E)

Please recycle

American Nations and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America.

As President of the General Assembly, I remain steadfast in my commitment to deepening the relationship between Venezuela and this body, with the aim of strengthening the founding principles of the United Nations.

May he rest in peace in the homeland of his hero, Simón Bolívar, from whom he drew inspiration time and again.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: It is an honour to join with the Assembly in paying tribute to the work and memory of His Excellency President Hugo Chávez Frías. President Chávez was one of those leaders who made a difference in his country, the region and the world. His sense of solidarity with the most vulnerable and his commitment to improving the lives of the most underprivileged resulted in a fierce attachment to the Millennium Development Goals.

He also showed solidarity towards other nations in the hemisphere. Perhaps most notably, President Chávez ensured that Venezuela provided crucial assistance to Haiti following the devastating earthquake of 2010. He always reminded the region of the historic debt that it owed to Haiti, the first republic to gain independence in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I also want to recognize the contribution that President Chávez made to the peace talks in Colombia between the Government of President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Basing himself on an eminently Latin American vision, President Chávez provided decisive impetus to new efforts towards regional integration. The United Nations has followed with interest and appreciation the advances in regional integration to which he gave momentum.

The progress in this area is clear, as illustrated by the Permanent Observer status before the General Assembly that the Union of South American Nations acquired in 2011. As the process of regional integration progresses, the key role that President Chávez played in promoting the unity of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean will be present in everyone's minds. But perhaps President Chávez will be best remembered for his ability to connect at a human level with the most vulnerable and give voice to their aspirations.

In memorializing President Chávez, I would like to recall his message when he first addressed the General Assembly in 1999. On that occasion, he stated his wish that one day in the near future it would be possible to proclaim that "peace, democracy and development have triumphed" (*A/54/PV.7, p. 4*). Let us honour the legacy of President Chávez by renewing our pledge to work toward these noble goals.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of Chad, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Allam-Mi (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I have the great honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States at this solemn gathering of the General Assembly to pay tribute to the memory of His Excellency President Hugo Chávez Frías, the late President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who recently passed away. I would like first of all to bow to the memory of this great son of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and to record that the announcement of his premature death at the age of only 59 years profoundly shocked and saddened millions of Africans.

Africa has lost a great friend. The passing of this great friend of Africa is undoubtedly an irreparable loss, but his leadership, especially in the conduct of international affairs in the interests of a fairer world, will not have been in vain. History will record his tireless fight for the weakest and most vulnerable, both in his country and around the world. In other words, President Chávez will live on in the hearts of millions of Africans.

(*spoke in English*)

On this solemn occasion, I also have the honour, on behalf of the African Group, to convey my deepest condolences to the family of the late President Hugo Chávez and to the Government and people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela at this great loss. We remain prayerful that as they traverse this sad and painful period, his memory will remain forever etched in their hearts and minds.

For many of our countries in Africa, the commitment of the late President Hugo Chávez to the economic well-being of his people was greatly admired.

The bond between the late President Chávez and Africa was further cemented through his leadership role in the establishment of the Africa-South America Partnership. May his soul rest in peace and light perpetual shine upon him!

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Sheikh Meshal Hamad M.J. Al-Thani (Qatar): On behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States, I would like to express my deepest condolences at the passing of the late President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías. It is with grief and sorrow that the Asia-Pacific Group received the sad news of the death of the late President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr. Hugo Chávez.

At the outset, let me refer to a statement issued by the World Bank regarding the education system in Venezuela, which notes that the number of children enrolled in secondary education rose during the 14 years of his presidency. The Centre for Economics and Policy Research has pointed out that poverty in Venezuela has fallen to its lowest level in a decade. The Asia-Pacific Group witnessed the efforts exerted by the deceased President to stand by his commitments to the poor and vulnerable in his country and beyond. He directed his country's wealth to vast social programmes and provided his citizens with the vital services they most needed — health care and education. He also strove to improve the educational system of his country and provided its citizens with free education, as well as eradicating illiteracy.

At the international level, the late President spoke out in favour of oppressed people and was a vocal advocate of an international system based on justice and equality for all. The Asia-Pacific Group believes that President Chávez was a strong advocate of a strong United Nations and of strengthening South-South cooperation. The number of world dignitaries and Venezuelan people who attended his funeral on Friday stands as testimony to his status as a world figure who had a great impact on the lives of millions of people.

Based on President Chávez's sympathy with the Asia-Pacific Group and the just causes of developing countries, he will be missed by his dearest friends and colleagues and will be remembered for his devotion to their causes. At this critical time, the Asia-Pacific Group hopes that the Government and the people of Venezuela will overcome the hardship that they are going through, and wishes them success in their efforts to achieve the development to which they aspire and to build the prosperous future of which President Chávez Frías dreamed. May his soul rest in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Moldova, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Lupan (Republic of Moldova): On behalf of the Group of Eastern Eastern European States, let me extend our condolences over the death of Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, the late President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, as well as to convey our sympathies to his family and to the people and Government of Venezuela.

President Chávez Frías will be remembered as a prominent personality who was active in the international arena, standing for social justice and equality for the citizens of Venezuela. The States members of the Eastern European Group look forward to the durable development of Venezuela and to the strengthening and diversification of our bilateral relations for the benefit of our peoples.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saint Lucia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Ms. Rambally (Saint Lucia): It is an honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. Today, we pay our deepest respects to the memory and contribution of the late President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías. Our region and the entire world have lost a man of enormous character and great courage and vision. He was bold and fearless, never hesitant to express his deep convictions and not afraid to champion the cause of the weak and the dispossessed.

We honour President Chávez Frías as a brave and distinguished leader who was firmly committed to the cause of the integration of the Latin American and Caribbean region, which he regarded as the *patria grande*. He reinforced that commitment in words and fulfilled it in deeds. His cooperation initiatives, such as Petrosur, Petrocaribe and other bold and imaginative measures, remain instrumental tools in assisting many countries of our region in meeting the formidable challenges to development caused by high energy costs.

He often said that the resources with which his country was blessed were to be shared in order to promote the progressive and independent development of the entire Latin American and Caribbean region, whose collective growth would be further enhanced through such collaboration.

To that end, his dedication to Latin American and Caribbean integration was a hallmark of his tenure, during which there was strong support for mechanisms such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. He was a strong advocate for South-South cooperation and the importance of reinforcing concepts, ideas and programmes to foster economic sovereignty among the countries of the South. He was a founding member of the Bank of the South, which was established in September 2009 as an alternative to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

President Chávez Frías was a tireless champion of the poor, the dispossessed and the marginalized, in his beloved Venezuela and beyond. His efforts to address economic, social and political inequality are legendary. His initiatives resulted in reducing poverty by a half and extreme poverty by two thirds, with a significant reduction in income inequality, according to independent estimates. His efforts steadily increased the standard of living of the majority of his people. That remained his primary focus.

One major success of President Chávez Frías was the broadening of public participation in Venezuela's political process. Such efforts in the socioeconomic and democratic spheres have created a new space for a broader dialogue on creative forms of development, all of which are people-centred.

President Chávez Frías was one of the most charismatic leaders. He emerged from relative poverty and identified with the ordinary man, the common person, who, in turn, identified with him. Perhaps his legacy is best illustrated by the thousands of people who came out into the streets of Caracas and other cities of the country to peacefully pay their respects to their beloved fallen leader. The many shouts of "I am Chávez" that filled the air were indeed an illustration of the love and dedication of the man and his ideal and of the commitment of the people to continue the struggle and to dare to win.

The States members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States grieve together with his family, the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and those across the world who share the deep commitment of President Hugo Chávez Frías to working tirelessly for the betterment of the people around the world and for the self-determination of peoples.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

As the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, we stand in solidarity with the people of Venezuela.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Finland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Taalas (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States to offer our condolences to the people and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on the passing away of their President, His Excellency Mr. Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías. Our thoughts and sympathies are with the family of President Chávez Frías and with the people of Venezuela at this difficult time.

The countries of our Group stand ready to work with Venezuela through the United Nations and other platforms for prosperity, security and democracy. We wish the people of Venezuela well and offer our sympathies at this time of grief.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Fiji, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Thomson (Fiji): On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I come before you, Mr. President, and the General Assembly to express profound condolences to the Government and people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela at this time of mourning for the passing of President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías. President Chávez Frías was the embodiment of the devoted leader who pursued a courageously principled path until the very end. He spoke for the multitudes of underprivileged people, both in Venezuela and around the world, who were most in need of the strong voice of a champion. His focus on providing basic services and maintaining policies that worked in favour of the poorest in society predated the world's articulation of the need to eradicate poverty as the first of its Millennium Development Goals. Deeds followed words and, under

his leadership, Venezuela moved up seven points on the Human Development Index of the United Nations, while a report by UN-Habitat in 2012 highlighted that Venezuela had the lowest rate of income inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Those are achievements of a leader who understood and acted upon the needs of his people. He was known as a leader who was not afraid to undertake the major changes needed to achieve his goals of greater inclusion of the marginalized through the use of national resources and the provision of education, housing and health care. President Chávez Frías translated those national priorities, which were shaped by his personal life experience of growing up in poverty, to the international arena. He challenged the laissez-faire attitudes of the international system and reminded us that real progress can be sustainable only if the benefits of development accrue equitably to all citizens, rather than just to elites.

President Chávez Frías stood firm in his commitment to the principles of respect for sovereignty and the equality of the rights of all States to make decisions in the best interests of their peoples. He believed that we must work together as equal States, and it was that cooperative spirit that underpinned many of his efforts to achieve regional cooperation and integration in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

The commitment of President Chávez Frías to the cause of the development of the South, his contribution to South-South solidarity and his legacy of struggle for equity in the world will serve as milestones to be long remembered. His moral values for social justice and his struggle for the cause of development for a better world will certainly serve as a source of inspiration for our Group. His legacy of providing effective leadership to the South during his chairmanship of the Group of 77 in 2002, his role in fostering solidarity among developing countries and his erstwhile promotion of South-South cooperation will be a source of enduring pride for our Group.

The world has indeed lost a visionary leader who challenged us all in our thinking and encouraged us to focus our work on the most pressing issues facing our generation. May the vision of President Chávez Frías continue to guide our work and spur us on as we continue to confront the many challenges before us. In sending our condolences to the Government and people of Venezuela and to the bereaved family of the late President in these difficult times, we are assured they will take forward his legacy and rise to achieve the potential that President Chávez Frías saw for his people and for his great country. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who will speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I address the General Assembly on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement to express our deepest and most sincere condolences to the citizens and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and to the brave family in the wake of the passing of President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías. President Chávez Frías devoted the best part of his life to enhancing the welfare and happiness of his people. He will be remembered as one of the great leaders of the non-aligned countries for the relentless efforts he made throughout his life to strengthen the independence of his country and to put in place measures and policies designed to improve the lives of millions of his fellow countrymen.

The Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement also recognizes the role President Hugo Chávez Frías played in the world. He believed in the need for the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean and promoted the processes aimed at helping to integrate that vast and important region. The commitment of President Chávez Frías to international peace and to the promotion of a world order based on respect for international law, sovereignty, political independence, the equality of the rights of States and the self-determination of peoples is also widely recognized.

The member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement recognize the dedication of President Hugo Chávez Frías to the interests of the people of the South. For that reason, they bestowed the chairmanship of the Movement upon his country, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, for the period 2015 to 2018. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba, who will speak on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to begin my statement by reading out a message from the Community of Latin American and

Caribbean States (CELAC) on the death of Commander and President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías.

> "The members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the peoples of America learned, to their deep dismay and great sadness, of the passing away of the Commander and President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr. Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, on Tuesday, 5 March 2013. We extend our deepest condolences to the family of Commander President Chávez Frías, to the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and to all the people of Venezuela, to whom he dedicated his life.
>
> "His unremitting dedication to the sovereignty and integration of our nations and to the development of solidarity among the peoples of the region; his commitment to eradicating poverty and inequality in Venezuela and in our region; his determination to work towards achieving a united, strong and secure Latin America and Caribbean are all values that have inspired the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. For CELAC — of which he was one of the key founders and promoters — the example set by Commander President Chávez Frías inspires us to redouble our efforts to achieve unity, cooperation, solidarity and integration in Latin America and the Caribbean. That is the best tribute that the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean can pay to Commander President Hugo Chávez Frías."

As the Permanent Representative of Cuba, I would like to reiterate the deep pain that the people and revolutionary Government of Cuba feel over the death of President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, a hero of the Americas. The historic leader of the Cuban revolution, Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, described Chávez as the best friend that the people of Cuba had throughout its history, and he emphasized that he was honoured to have shared the Bolivarian leader's ideals of social justice and support for the exploited.

President Chávez Frías led a tremendous battle throughout his short and fruitful life. We will always remember him as a patriotic soldier in the service of Venezuela and the great fatherland; as an honest, perceptive, bold and brave revolutionary fighter; as a supreme leader and commander who reincarnated Bolivar in order to carry out the work he could not finish.

All of Chávez's work stands unassailable before us. The victories of a revolutionary people, who saved him from the coup of April 2002 and have followed him without hesitation, are now irreversible. As Cuban President Raul Castro Ruz said, Hugo Chávez died undefeated, invincible and victorious, and he carved out a distinguished place for himself in history.

Chávez shined in international battles in the face of imperialism. He always defended the poor, the workers, our peoples. He was passionate, persuasive, eloquent, ingenious and moving. He spoke to the hearts of people, sang our joys and recited our passionate verses with eternal optimism.

Cuba will remain eternally loyal to the memory and legacy of Commander President Chávez and will carry on his ideals for the unity of the revolutionary forces and for the integration and independence of our America. His example will lead us in our next battles. Forever onward to victory, Commander President Chávez!

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Peru, who will speak on behalf of the Union of South American Nations.

Mr. Román-Morey (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): In conveying our deepest condolences on this occasion, on behalf of my country, Peru, as well as on my own behalf and on behalf of the Permanent Mission that I am honoured to represent, I ask the family, the Government and, above all, the people of Venezuela to accept our most heartfelt expression of Bolivarian, South American and Latin American solidarity. On this occasion, representing my country in its capacity as Chair of the Union of South American Nations, I have the honour of conveying the UNASUR statement on the occasion of the recent death of President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías.

> "The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) expresses its deepest grief at the passing away of the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Commander Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, a resolute champion of South American unity and integration. It was under the visionary impetus of President Hugo Chávez Frías that the decision was taken to establish UNASUR, in April 2007, at Isla Magarita, Venezuela. Since then, his tireless commitment to the South American cause has served to characterize our integration process with the inspired search for well-being and justice for the vast majority of our peoples.

"President Chávez Frías will live on in the collective memory of our peoples because of his role as a regional leader for integration and as a symbol of a generation of statespersons who cemented South American identity and unity, following the legacy bequeathed to us by the liberators. UNASUR shares in the pain and encourages the spiritual strength of the noble people and Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in particular the family of President Chávez Frías in their grief in such difficult circumstances."

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guyana, who will speak on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

Mr. Talbot (Guyana): On behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), I have the honour to pay tribute to the memory of Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, late President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. His passing has touched our Community with sadness and a profound sense of loss. The overwhelming presence of CARICOM Heads of State in Caracas on 8 March gave eloquent testimony to the high esteem in which this remarkable leader was held by the Governments and peoples of our region.

In the words of the Chairman of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, His Excellency Michel Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti:

"President Chávez Frías opened a new chapter in relations between the countries of CARICOM and Venezuela with his generosity and deep interest in the welfare of the peoples of the Community. His outstretched hand to support our countries during times of great challenge will never be forgotten, in particular the generous assistance rendered by Venezuela to my country, Haiti, following the earthquake of 2010, as well as to other member States of the Community. His desire to improve the lives of the less fortunate in his country, the Caribbean and in Latin America was the hallmark of his political life and ensured that his name would be etched in the history of the region."

Hugo Chávez Frías was a true friend to CARICOM. He demonstrated solidarity with the Governments and peoples of the region through tangible acts of cooperation, which redounded to the benefit of ordinary people. President Chávez's vision for the unity of the people of Latin America and the Caribbean was driven by his deep sense of concern for the well-being of the disadvantaged in society, not only in his country but in the wider region. In that respect, his tremendous advocacy for South-South cooperation and self-reliance was indeed a bold and determined appeal for the sustainable development and economic prosperity of developing countries — an appeal that challenged leaders to combat inequality and injustice at the individual, national, regional and international levels and to work for the common good. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America — Peoples' Trade Agreement, the Union of South American Nations, Petrocaribe, Petrosur and the Bank of the South, among others, all bear testimony to his outstanding work in concert with others.

President Chávez Frías has left an indelible imprint on Latin America and the Caribbean and, indeed, the world. Most importantly, he will be remembered for the love and high aspirations he held for Venezuela and his fellow compatriots.

I take this opportunity once again to extend CARICOM's deepest sympathies to the Government and people of Venezuela and to the family of the late President. I am confident that the strength and spirit of the Venezuelan people, so strikingly exemplified by President Chávez Frías, will sustain that sister country in its time of grief and ensure its future in this season of change.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bolivia, who will speak on behalf of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish at the outset to convey revolutionary greetings to our colleague Mr. Elías Jaua Milano, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who is with us on this occasion. At the same time, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, on behalf of the countries of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) — Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Venezuela — thanks you, Sir, for convening today's meeting in tribute to our dear President Comandante Hugo Chávez Frías. ALBA endorses the statements made by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, of Cuba on behalf

of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean Nations (CELAC), and of Saint Lucia on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, We also welcome the statements made by the representatives of Peru on behalf of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and of Guyana on behalf of the Caribbean Community, as well as others who have spoken before us.

We are here to honour the memory of an extraordinary man. He was extraordinary not because he was unable to hold his tongue, which is a great deal in a world of complacent people who are used to dissumulate their indignation and shame when they see misery and injustice. In addition to speaking out loud and clear, Hugo Chávez was a man who taught us to build and to put our bodies, minds, hearts and souls in the service of the greatest cause of all — that of the liberation of peoples and the revolution that transforms for the better the lives of each and every one of us. Hugo Rafael Chávez was a man and leader who, together with Fidel Castro, dared to interrupt the imperial monologue when no one else would, and to denounce crimes that take place every day. He was the man who spoke out in this very Hall to tell truths that everyone thought but no one dared to say. Chávez taught us in this very place to speak of writers such as Noam Chomsky and such books as *The Open Veins of Latin America,* of the future from the present perspective and of the present from the future perspective. That is why we believe that today it is also necessary to learn from the life of this great Latin American, this great revolutionary and this great man.

Why did he not hold his tongue? He did not because, as Fidel said in his message of farewell to this great man, he shared with so many other men and women the ideals of social justice and support for the exploited, because he knew that the poor are the same all over the world and that poverty is the first enemy to be defeated. He denounced that reality in order to transform it, starting long before he became the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, since the time he was a young officer aware of the fact that he needed to change a world marked by injustice. But as we have already said, Hugo Chávez Frías was a man who did not content himself with words. On the contrary, he always knew how to put deeds ahead of speeches because he was a man who believed in just causes and because he was a revolutionary.

He was a leader who dreamed of giving the peoples of America sovereignty and independence, and of making the rights of Mother Earth a tangible reality. He succeeded in doing so. He was a leader who gave us an idea of a great homeland, as Simon Bolívar dreamed of it. He also dared to put into practice such great initiatives as ALBA, on behalf of whose members I speak today and which seeks nothing less than to spread literacy and to distribute medicine, doctors and nurses — that is, to share with others the gifts we have received by luck or by effort. Through such initiatives as the Bank of the South, which unlike capitalist financial institutions, acts for the sake of cooperation and solidarity to provide funds to developing countries while respecting their sovereignty and strengthening their national independence, and not to subordinate them in order to profit in exchange for impoverishing their people. They therefore reject the odious conditionalities imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions, which are a clear violation of the sovereignty of nations.

At a time when unilateralism was being imposed, President Chávez developed a geopolitical concept of liberation based on strengthening the powers of sovereign peoples and States predicated on multiple polarities and multicentrism. Out of that arose ALBA, UNASUR, the South America-Africa Cooperation Forum and CELAC, which is also a new name for the integration of peoples with dignity and sovereignty and which, unlike others, is governed not by the will of an empire, but rather by solidarity. Initiatives such as Petrocaribe are the proof that our natural resources can be shared for the good of all instead of being used as an instrument of domination and the enrichment of the very few to the detriment of the whole planet, and a way of doing things differently, realizing the dream of two other great Venezuelans — Bolívar and Miranda.

At a time when climate change, the loss of biological diversity and desertification processes are major threats to humankind, we need to remember Hugo Chávez. His strength and admirable vigour have also been acknowledged by the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement, which have designated Venezuela as the host country for its next summit and future president of the Movement. President Chávez showed us that solidarity must defeat pillaging, and that complementarity is more powerful than competitiveness because without solidarity we fall apart. Hospitals, doctors, teachers and education are of course greater than bullets, cannons and invasions. In his way, he showed us that

the peoples of the South are no longer and never will be again — please hear me clearly — never will be again anybody's backyard.

Today we mourn his passing, but we know that there are grounds for happiness. The world that Hugo Chávez left us is a better place. It is not yet the one he wished to see, but it is much better for all of us. For that reason also, anyone who was worried about the existence of Chávez should be even more worried now because, although he may have left us, the revolutionary force lives on. Our sorrow over his passing strengthens us in our courage to embrace and above all make a reality of the dreams of Bolívar, Manuela Sáenz, Antonio José de Sucre and José de San Martín. These were also the dreams of Túpac Katari, Bartolina Sisa, Túpac Amaru, Micaela Bastidas, José Martí, Francisco Morazán, Eloy Alfaro, Augusto Sandino, Che Guevara, Fidel and Raúl Castro and many others who never wavered in the fight for the freedom, dignity and joy of the great and noble peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.

There are so many more. Today, at the head of this movement that will not be stopped or turned back, we have Baldwin Spencer of Antigua and Barbuda, President Evo Morales of Bolivia, Raúl Castro of Cuba, Roosevelt Skerrit of Dominica, Rafael Correa of Ecuador, Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, Ralph Gonsalves of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and our comrade Nicolás Maduro, the man in whom Venezuela, Latin America and the world vest their hopes.

Lastly, we endorse the words that Fidel Castro uttered more than 54 years ago in Caracas and which remain valid and as powerful today. If we wish to save America; if we wish to save the freedom of each and every one of our societies, which are ultimately part and parcel of a great society of Latin America; and if we wish to save the revolution of Cuba, the revolution of Venezuela and the revolution of all the countries of our continent, then we have to close ranks and back each other up in solidarity; otherwise, alone and divided we will fail.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As Permanent Representative of Bolivia, I reiterate the words of President Evo Morales Ayma, who said and says that Hugo Chávez Frías was the champion of the poor and that the fight against capitalism, imperialism and colonialism remains valid. Long live the memory of Hugo Chávez Frías! Our best tribute will be always to follow his example until victory. We will win!

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay, who will speak on behalf of the Common Market of the South.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): As Permanent Representative of Uruguay, allow me to start by reiterating the grief and solidarity of the people and Government of Uruguay with the family of President Hugo Chávez Frías and the people and Government of Venezuela. I have no words to add to those of President Mujica in Caracas, but may the people and Government of Venezuela know that Uruguay will always be where it should be, at their side.

Allow me now to read out the official statement of the Common Market of the South on the occasion of the death of Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which has deeply touched our people's hearts.

"President Chavez Frías was the founder of the modern and democratic State of Venezuela. Historic injustices have increasingly given way to a nation of equality and justice and the hope and trust that we will have a future that is free.

"President Chávez Frías was also one of the main architects of integration and sisterhood among our peoples. Initiatives such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Union of South American Nations and the Bank of the South became a reality thanks to the unwavering dedication of President Chávez Frías to achieving the generous dream of the great fatherland of Simón Bolivar.

"President Chávez Frías is an irreplaceable figure of the twenty-first century with an outstanding presence in the eminent gallery of great names in the struggle for the liberation of peoples in world history. With a stature that matched that of his revolutionary forefathers, he rose to today's complex challenges, in particular in building a fair, equitable and happy future for humankind. The ideals of freedom, democracy and equality that governed the revolutionary life of President Chávez Frías are at the heart of the integration of the South and Latin American peoples and the hope of building another world free of domination

and oppression. That is not only possible but also urgently needed. The history of humankind in the liberation of peoples found in Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, one of its most noble authors. In that regard, Chávez Frías was one of those vital human beings proclaimed by Bertolt Brecht."

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government and people of Chile, I wish to convey our sincere condolences to the Government and people and the Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on the terrible loss of President Hugo Chávez Frías. We also express our solidarity with his family. After a long and hard fight for his life, President Chávez Frías now rests in peace.

We remember him as a charismatic man of tireless energy, dedicated to public service. Noted for his commitment to the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean, President Chávez Frías inspired various initiatives in our region. As host of the Caracas summit of December 2011, he was responsible for a historic landmark, namely, the establishment of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). During Chile's presidency of CELAC, together with the sisterly Republic of Cuba, we worked closely with President Chávez Frías as members of the troika of that body. That task was characterized by a shared dedication and fruitful efforts for integration under the principle of unity and diversity, which allowed us to move towards the development and well-being of our peoples.

In bidding farewell to President Hugo Chávez Frías, I wish to recall the words of the Heads of State of the Latin American and Caribbean States meeting at the first CELAC summit in Santiago last January: "Everything that we do for unity will not only be borne out by history but also become the brightest legacy that we could leave for future generations".

Mr. Khalil (Egypt): We learned with great sadness and profound grief of the passing away of Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, late President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Mr. Chávez Frías served his country with passion, devotion and commitment.

As President of Venezuela for 14 years, Mr. Chávez Frías has left a lasting impression on his country and the world. He will be remembered for his bold assertion of autonomy and independence for the peoples of developing nations. His courage, formidable communication skills and personal ability to connect with the people in his country and abroad will be missed. Egypt and the Arab world will never forget his principled position with regard to the question of Palestine and the occupied Arab territories.

We will always remember Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías as an exceptional leader and an international figure who advocated the principles of social equality, justice and independence. Egypt wishes to extend its sincere condolences and sympathy to the family of Mr. Chávez Frías and to the Government and the people of Venezuela on this great loss. The legacy of President Chávez Frías will endure. It will inspire the people of Venezuela and those of the global South in their ongoing quest for freedom, dignity and development. May God Almighty bless his soul and reward him for all that he has done for his people and this world.

Ms. Potter (Seychelles): On this sad occasion, I would like, on behalf of the Government and the people of Seychelles, to express our solidarity and support to the family of President Chávez and to the Government and the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in their moment of great loss and bereavement. The loss of a leader like President Chávez is one not only for Venezuela, but for the whole of Latin America and beyond. President Chávez will be remembered for his utmost dedication to the concerns of his country and people, but he will be particularly remembered for being a real man of the people and a strong advocate of the less fortunate. His legacy will continue to guide and inspire present and future generations alike. My country, the Seychelles, will continue to deepen the relations of friendship and respect that our two peoples have always enjoyed. May his soul rest in peace.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

May the good fight continue in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a woman in politics, I have learned that we must not merely interpret leaders' ideas. What we must do is freely choose to take them up as shining lights before us — lights in the darkness of mediocrity, indifference and forgetfulness. Out of respect and affection, and for the sake of consistency, I will not read out my own words to have them inscribed in the archives of history. What I want to do today is to share with the Assembly the words of a man who made history — words that he

spoke to his people and our peoples at various times throughout his life.

"Weeping tears," as José Martí said. That is what we all share today — tears for our great homeland and for humanity.

> "Look to the streets. How can you remain indifferent before this great river of bones, this great river of dreams, this great river of blood, this great river?"

I have recalled again and again this week those beautiful words by the great Cuban poet and poet of the Americas, Nicolás Guillén. I have meditated again and again on the meaning and feeling expressed in every one of his words. This very river of bones, dreams and blood has shown its mighty grandeur in these difficult times of ours.

My President, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, said, in her farewell to her friend, "Men like Chávez do not die; they are sown like seeds." Men like Chávez are sown like seeds throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Bolívar said that the great dream of South America has not yet arrived. Two centuries have passed since then, and our day has come. It has arrived, we have arrived, and we will be victorious. In a world marked by violence and war, both as threats and as realities, in South America we say no. In the Caribbean, we say no. In Latin America, we say no. We must strengthen our Latin American and Caribbean land to create a world of peace and show by example, in this world of war, misery, violence and invasions, how to build a world through democracy and the most eloquent words we can utter — words from our very souls and from the spirit of the warriors who we are.

We have embarked on a new path in our relations. We have been able to turn the page in a different way, recognizing and respecting our differences and opening up new horizons. We must take the utmost care of all that we have achieved. We cannot give a foothold to those who would have our differences divide us. The cornerstone of liberty in South America, as Bolívar said, has been laid. That is the key that allows us to understand the changing times, which started in South America and are being extended to all of America. United by the bonds forged in heaven, all of America is a nation.

Men like Chávez are sown like seeds throughout the world. I am convinced that a new day has dawned. The geopolitical map is radically different from that of the late twentieth century or the early twenty-first. We are forging as one a new world, a multipolar world in which we each have our own national character, goals and geostrategic sphere; where we do not enclose ourselves within our borders but participate actively in building a new global system.

The unipolar world is no more. Our duty is to usher in the birth of a new, multipolar world that is balanced in the political, economic, social, cultural spheres. It demands a new world order in which the true interests of the people prevail and capital is not prioritized to the exclusion of everything else. It means radically changing the rules of the game. Now more than ever, we must redistribute humanity throughout the globe. To do so, a spirit of rebellion must live within all of us, so that we can continue to make progress and keep from getting bogged down, because our trials are not the result of nature playing a dirty trick on us. They are the direct result of the injustice that reigns in the world and that has had the greatest impact on the poor and on our peoples, who bear the least responsibility for the litany of disasters.

This is the dream of world peace, our dream of a world without the shame of hunger, sickness or illiteracy. Our extreme need requires us to grow not only roots, but also wings to fly. The challenge is great, as is our determination to not allow ourselves to be swallowed up by the dark forces that seek to concentrate wealth in the hands of the few at the expense of millions of human beings. We will rise above those gravediggers to strive for the dawn of a new history for this planet — a multipolar world, free and new, a world of peace.

Men like Chávez are scattered like seeds among the peoples of the world because there are times when the course of history is revealed and shows once again the path that people must take. There are times that reveal this and make it clear; that lead to commitment and reveal the destiny that we must live out in order to weigh the past and see with greater clarity the liberation that lies ahead.

> "I am not much in the habit of weeping, but when I do, I weep with my whole being and my sorrow overflows into a confession — a confession that expresses the infinite pain in my heart when I received the terrible news of the physical departure of that great man Nestor Kirchner, my comrade, friend and brother."

That is what President Chávez said on 27 November 2010 on the death of our President Nestor Kirchner. In that same spirit, the Government and people of Argentina are not saying farewell to this symbol of equality or to the dream of liberation. With profound emotion and commitment, the Government and people of Argentina say to him and the Venezuelan people: forever onward to victory, Comandante President; forever onward to victory, our friend and comrade Hugo Chávez Frías.

Mr. García González (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are brought together today by a great individual who departed this world more than a week ago, but who has left us a precious legacy to cherish. Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, showed outstanding leadership and by all accounts will enter humankind's history books. In this posthumous tribute, we join our voices with those of millions of human beings around the world in support of the brotherly Venezuelan people and their Government at this very difficult time. At the same time, we remind them that in the international concert of nations they enjoy the backing of those who represent it here.

As representative of El Salvador to the United Nations, I recall and appreciate Chávez's devotion to his people and the commitment he always embraced to achieving the dream of Bolívar: unity, liberty and harmony among the peoples of the Americas. In that context, I would like to convey the respect in which the Salvadoran Government holds this event, which has moved us all. I recall the words of our President, Mauricio Funes Cartagena, who said that Venezuela is losing not only a President but a patriot, a man of transformative thoughts and deeds who governed for his people and changed the reality of inequality and exclusion that the Venezuelan people suffered under before he took office.

We are all aware of Venezuela's progress in the social field, particularly for the more than 3 million Venezuelans who have emerged from extreme poverty and the 5 million who no longer live in conditions of poverty. Among his achievements, we should also emphasize the reduction in deaths from malnutrition and the access to food that the population now enjoys, all thanks to the programmes that President Chávez launched with so much dynamism and vision. Throughout his rule, we also all witnessed his great human sensitivity and solidarity with the neediest peoples and lands. In El Salvador, for example, we remember him for all the help he gave to the families affected by the 2001 earthquakes, especially in the municipality of Comasagua La Libertad, where the town was rebuilt thanks to the friendly, supportive hand he extended.

Beyond that specific attention, our country has always viewed the Administration of Venezuela's President as a Government on the side of the development, well-being and growth of Latin America. We have always succeeded in maintaining harmonious ties that have helped us realize numerous cooperative projects to benefit our peoples. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hugo Martínez Bonilla, has also lamented his passing, saying that this was a sad day for Venezuela and for our continent, and that El Salvador expressed its solidarity in this time of mourning with the Venezuelan nation, with which we are united by historic ties of brotherhood. May those words stand as a tribute of gratitude for all the actions that will live forever for the Salvadoran people.

The tribute we pay to Hugo Chávez, who fought fiercely for his life, is given not in farewell but in recognition of his leadership, which will transcend the generations. We reiterate our most sincere condolences to our Venezuelan brothers and sisters, and wish them strength for the sad times they are enduring. At the same time, we thank them for having shared with all of the Americas this great patriot, who always preached justice and truth. May President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías rest in peace. He will always live in our hearts.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela with us at this meeting.

There is an Arab proverb that says that everyone receives what destiny has in store for him and that a man's name is an indicator of his personality. In the mid-nineteenth century, the great writer Victor Hugo wrote of poverty in *Les Misérables*, an eloquent novel known throughout the world. One hundred and fifty years later, fate saw to it that the land of Venezuela produced another Hugo, who decided to put an end to misery and wretchedness in his country and to fight poverty and social injustice around the world. Thus, the Hugo of Venezuela put into effect the very same great humanitarian recommendation left to him by that other Hugo of the mid-nineteenth century.

Fate has claimed the life of Hugo Chávez, the militant President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, a

great leader who preserved his country's independence and the freedom of his people, and who embodied a legendary steadfastness in the face of external attempts to exercise hegemony over peoples and States. He managed to ensure Venezuela's sovereignty and prevent interference in its affairs. He dedicated his life to championing freedom, social justice and sovereign equality for his people. He took a principled position against foreign occupation, invasion, aggression and injustice.

As much as the passing away of President Hugo Chávez Frías was a loss for the brotherly Government and people of Venezuela and for the countries and peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, it was also a great loss for the Government and people of Syria. My country, Syria, will always remember that brilliant leader and appreciate his support for Arab causes, the foremost of which is the question of Palestine, and his position on the question of the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as his stance on Syria in the face of the terrorism to which it has been subject and which is supported by forces of darkness and ignorance and by colonial countries that no longer make any pretense about their public support for such reckless terrorism. Those States are known for their enmity to the aspirations of the Syrian people to reform, development, dialogue and total independence and their rejection of foreign interference in internal affairs.

The memory and achievements of the late President Chávez Frías will remain alive in the hearts of the peoples and free men of the world. His dedication and his career will remain assets for us and for all humankind. We extend our condolences to his family and parents, all the people of Venezuela and to the Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations, my dear friend Ambassador Jorge Valero Briceño.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Belarus, I would like to express profound and heartfelt condolences to the people and Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in connection with the passing away of President Hugo Chávez Frías. Our hearts are full of sadness and profound grief at the passing away of a friend and brother of Belarus.

The President of the Republic of Belarus attended the farewell ceremony for President Hugo Chávez Frías in Caracas. A three-day official state of mourning was declared in Belarus. Today from the rostrum of the General Assembly, I am honoured to read out the address of the President of the Republic of Belarus, Mr. Alyaksandr Lukashenka:

> "Belarus weeps and grieves with the Venezuelan people in mourning the untimely death of Hugo Chávez Frías, one of the greatest statesmen and public figures of the modern age, an unflinching hero, an ardent patriot and fighter for independence, an outstanding politician, thinker and orator, a brilliant and strong lover of life whose entire life was unreservedly and completely devoted to serving his fatherland. Under the leadership of Hugo Chávez Frías, the heir and successor of the sacred cause of Simon Bolívar, Venezuela cast off the odious yoke of backwardness and misery and freed itself from political and economic oppression by foreign Powers.
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> "President Chávez confidently led his fatherland towards freedom and happiness with a strong and firm hand. For millions of people he was, and I am sure will always remain, a true father of the Venezuelan nation, a champion of the poor, the underprivileged and the repressed, a beacon of hope and a bulwark of democracy on the South American continent. In the person of Hugo Chávez Frías, we have lost a close and good friend who loved Belarus and always extended us a helping hand in difficult times. Our joint work for the good of Belarus and Venezuela and the warm human relations that always united us throughout the years will remain some of my fondest memories throughout my life. The name of the President of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez Frías, will be written in gold in the annals of world history, and his personality and accomplishments now belong to eternity.
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> "Today, at this time of pain and grief, we convey our condolences to those closest to Hugo Chávez Frías and all the people of Venezuela, and swear by the memory of that great leader to implement our joint designs and plans, maintain the policy of friendship and mutual assistance, and do everything for the further strengthening of the voluntary cooperation for the good of both countries. Rest in peace our friend and brother, Hugo Chávez Frías; your deeds will live on forever."

Mrs. Dunlop (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Brazil aligns itself with the statements made today, especially those of the representatives of the regional and subregional organizations of our corner of the world.

The Government of Brazil joins the people and Government of Venezuela and especially the family of President Hugo Chávez Frías in their mourning. President Chávez will live on in the memory of our peoples as the Venezuelan leader who developed the closest ties with Brazil, heading a process of rapprochement with our country that is unprecedented in history. Under his presidency, Venezuela has become a strategic partner of Brazil and a full member of the Southern Common Market. At the national level, President Chávez Frías undertook a process of economic, social and political advances which helped to significantly reduce social inequality among Venezuelans. At the regional level, the Venezuelan leader played an important role in integration efforts, in particular in creating the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

At this time of sadness and pain, the Government of Brazil wishes to express its full solidarity with the people and the Government of Venezuela, especially with the family of President Chávez Frías.

Mr. Jaua Milano (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I speak on behalf of Interim President Nicolás Maduro Moros, the entire Bolivarian Government and the Venezuelan people, who today raise their voices in song, weeping and statements to honour the memory of President Commander Hugo Chávez Frías.

We thank those present and all the representatives of the countries of the world represented in the Assembly for their words of solidarity in the light of the physical disappearance of the supreme leader of the Bolivarian revolution. We deeply thank the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the Chairmen of the Groups of African, Latin American and Caribbean, Asian-Pacific, Eastern European and Western European and other States before the United Nations. Our deepest thanks also go to the representatives of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, the Union of South American Nations and the various organizations who have spoken, as well as all countries that have taken the floor at this event in order to pay tribute to the memory of President Hugo Chávez Frías.

Today, we pay tribute to an important leader who understood the historic time in which we live. He dedicated his life to continuing the freedom movement of Simón Bolívar not only in our beloved native land by strengthening an unprecedented revolutionary process, whose social benefits are known throughout the world, but also beyond the borders of our fatherland, fostering the common unity and integrity of Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and all peoples of the South. But, above all, may participants know that they are paying tribute to a good man, a true Christian and a humanist, President Hugo Chávez Frías.

For years, however, he was subjected to a systematic international demonizing campaign by world Powers. Hugo Chávez Frías entered political life on 4 February 1992, leading a people's military rebellion brought about by the surrender of the fatherland to the poverty and exclusion that Venezuela experienced in the 1990s. We note in particular that the military rebellion was launched out of contempt for the political leadership of the time, which had ordered the military forces to mercilessly repress the first social rebellion against neoliberalism in the world, which took place in our country in February 1989. It claimed hundreds of victims, including children and the elderly, amounting to the greatest violation of human rights in our country.

Hugo Chávez Frías became President of Venezuela in 1999 by popular vote. He was re-elected three times. He defeated a referendum that sought to revoke his term in office. He defeated two attempted coups d'état by imperialists. He defied innumerable assassination attempts. He never gave in to pressures to renounce his popular mandate to transform Venezuela into a place of happiness for the great majority. President Hugo Chávez Frías survived the attacks of imperialism and the bourgeoisie. Commander Hugo Chávez Frías died victorious.

The Government of President Hugo Chávez Frías has been a landmark in Venezuela's national and foreign policies. In the past, our country was embroiled in the interests of the North and turned into an oil plant. When he first came to power in 1999, Venezuela was moving towards the Free Trade Area of the Americas. The privatization of our oil industry was almost a reality. Our country blindly followed the positions

and the direction of the great Powers in international forums and negotiations.

Fourteen years later, everything has changed. Venezuelan foreign policy has become the independent, sovereign and loyal expression of the feeling of the Venezuelan people and the doctrine of Simón Bolivar, our liberating father. During the presidency of Commander Hugo Chávez Frías, Venezuela's foreign policy essentially sought to promote the common integration of peoples and to establish ties so as to develop the nations of the South and to strengthen their political independence, sovereignty and inalienable right to self-determination.

A few months after being elected President of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez Frías said that his political programme was

> "to put human beings first, as they should be. Venezuela thereby seeks to help not only itself but also, as Bolivar's fatherland has always done, its brothers of Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, Africa and everywhere, in particular the South and the third world, in pursuit of a much better path for our peoples. Our life follows that path and we must devote our life to that path, as so many have done."

Commander Chávez Frías bequeathed us his creative effort for the union of the peoples of the world, built with other regional leaders and achieved in the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. President Chávez Frías in particular worked to set up the Africa-South America Summit and the Summit of South American-Arab Countries and to strengthen the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. He established Petrocaribe, recognized as an unprecedented energy cooperation instrument, and Venezuela's membership of the Common Market of the South. He strengthened ties with emerging countries of the South.

In the context of the United Nations, Venezuela helped to strengthen the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement. The latter, in recognition of the leadership of President Hugo Chávez Frías, granted Venezuela the presidency of the Movement for the period 2015-2018. Rest assured that Venezuela will resolutely shoulder the responsibility that the 121 countries comprising the Movement have entrusted to it. Now more than ever, that is a commitment to the memory of President Hugo Chávez Frías.

Today, we pay tribute to a great visionary who waged tireless battles in order to reset the foundations of our universal relationship, to put the human being above capital and to ensure truly sustainable development that does not threaten the future of humankind.

Among other elements, thanks to the brave thinking of Hugo Chávez Frías and his bold actions, we broke the Washington consensus and the thesis of the end of history and the triumph of capitalism. The peoples of the South once again hoisted anti-imperialist, anti-colonial and anti-neoliberal banners and the redeeming word of socialism began to resonate once more in world forums as the tangible hope for human emancipation. How can we forget the statement made from this rostrum that "it smells of sulphur here" as an ingenious way of denouncing belligerent imperialism or the memorable battle against the Free Trade Area of the Americas, truly crushing the neoliberal economic model, which sought to thwart the self-determination of peoples and to subject us to hunger and eternal poverty. How can one forget his successful effort to ensure that the revolutionary Cuba of Fidel and Martí, the Cuba of Latin American dignity, was freed from the disgraceful neocolonial sanctions imposed on that brotherly people by the Organization of American States.

In this tribute, as the children of Bolívar and Chávez Frías, we have come to endorse their crucial proposals for building another possible world. The time has come to unite efforts in order to revamp the United Nations. That is what President Hugo Chávez Frías proposed in his statements before this body in 2006 and 2009. That is an urgent necessity for the countries of the South.

We cannot remain insensitive to the deteriorating living conditions of the Palestinian people, in particular the women and children living in the occupied Palestinian territory. Strengthening the Palestinian State and its entry as a full Member of the United Nations is a historic debt of the Organization. The overwhelming will of the General Assembly has called for an end to the embargo on the heroic Cuban people for five decades. However, that will is still ignored.

The prevailing relationships today are based on global financial and economic power, through which a handful of countries maintain a monopoly on international credit. Those unjust institutions impair the sovereignty of the nations of the South and therefore

must be transformed. We face an emerging need for creating our own economic and financial institutions founded on the principles and values of solidarity and complementarity.

We cannot continue to allow environmental and climate deterioration; thousands of people to day every die from hunger, especially in our Mother Africa; or ethnic groups and ancestral cultures to disappear, thereby jeopardizing the diverse heritage of humankind. We are facing a crisis of an exploitative nature with three fundamental pivots: the exploitation of human beings, the exploitation of nature and the exploitation of us, the peoples of the South.

To fight against those oppressive realities, President Hugo Chávez Frías proposed the building of a United Nations that would represent the aspirations of all peoples and Governments of the world. Only in that way can we attain peace, justice, solidarity and the development of the peoples of the world. The United Nations must find effective and just means for addressing and resolving global conflicts. Foreign interventions only beget more violence and more instability. President Chávez Frías always underscored the fact that the peaceful means referred to in the Charter of the United Nations must prevail when the time comes to tackle the solution of conflicts.

In his statement at UNESCO in 1999, President Hugo Chávez Frías said:

> "I am just a bearer of millions of voices and beating hearts that dare, in some small way, to search for the peace we all wish to see. But a true peace, not the peace of the graveyard, not the peace of a gag nor the peace of fettered slaves, nor the peace of the misérables of Victor Hugo — but true peace, life, education, culture and happiness for all".

In 2006, here in this Hall, President Chávez stressed the need for making progress in enlarging the Security Council both in terms of both permanent and non-permanent seats, thereby creating opportunities for developing countries. He said that the Security Council should adequately represent all the regions of the world. He also called for the strengthening of the General Assembly, so that it would recover the place and importance that it had in the past. He stated that the voice of the countries of the South should be increasingly heard in this forum. President Chávez Frías referred to the need for continuing to bolster the Non-Aligned Movement and for promoting a sound and united movement that would open up a new era for the United Nations, in which the countries of the South may genuinely have an impact on global affairs and make progress towards peace among peoples and nations.

Today we need to advance towards the construction of a new economy that will make it possible for each man, woman, boy and girl on the Earth to eat and be clothed and sheltered. To do that, there is a need to strengthen the common platform of the South for economic and social matters. Comandante Chávez Frías unstintingly worked for those objectives when he called for consolidating unity within the Group of 77 and China. President Chávez Frías gave his utmost to achieve a world in which peace, justice, solidarity and the well-being of the human being prevailed, which he felt was possible only through socialism.

Hugo Chávez Frías served the United Nations and complied with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set forth by it. During his tenure, extreme poverty in Venezuela was reduced from 26 to 6 per cent, and he left us a mandate to eradicate it over the next six years. Hunger and illiteracy were eradicated. We made progress in the universalization of education, the active participation of women in all areas of national life, the protection of childhood and maternity, the environment and wholesale access to information and communication technologies. That is part and parcel of his legacy for the overall social happiness of our people and his commitment to the human cause.

Comandante Chávez Frías loved the Venezuelan people, just as he loved all the peoples of the world, especially the indigenous peoples and those of African descent. The legacy of President Chávez Frías is a benchmark for the oppressed peoples and nations of the world. Those of us who survive him in leading the political conduct of the Bolivarian revolution are committed to raising aloft with greater force than ever the banner of Bolivarian socialism in order to modestly contribute to a more humane humankind.

The leadership of the Bolivarian revolution headed by our comrade President-in-charge Nicolás Maduro Moros wishes to convey to the General Assembly our resolve to guarantee peace and the political, economic and social stability of Venezuela, as well as respect for all the international treaties and agreements, reaffirming the irrefutable principles of self-determination, sovereignty and the peaceful settlement of international conflicts. Nonetheless, we

wish to draw attention to the intentions of far-right groups, often fostered by imperialist forces, to disrupt the tranquillity of Venezuelan society. The Assembly should know that we have the democratic institutions and the political maturity to thwart those attempts. Only the Venezuelan people may decide in a sovereign manner at the elections to be convened on 14 April 2013 who will be the President and according to which social model we wish to live.

We are sure that the model of society set out in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela of 1999, as further developed by President Hugo Chávez Frías in the Plan for the Homeland submitted at the recent elections held on 7 October 2012, which was adopted by more than 56 per cent of the electorate, will be ratified. That model of society is underpinned by five great historic objectives written in his own hand by Comandante Chávez Frías in his Plan for the Homeland, which I will read out verbatim:

> "First, to defend, expand and consolidate the most valuable achievement of the past 200 years, namely, our regained national independence;
>
> "Secondly, to continue building Bolivarian socialism of the twenty-first century in Venezuela as an alternative to the savage model of capitalism, and thereby ensure the greatest possible happiness, the greatest possible security and the greatest possible political stability for our people;
>
> "Thirdly, to turn Venezuela into a country that is a social, economic and political power among the nascent great Powers of Latin American and the Caribbean, guaranteeing the building of a zone of peace in our Americas;
>
> "Fourthly, to contribute to the development of a new international geopolitics in which a multicentric and multipolar world would take shape, making it possible to strike a balance in the universe and to guarantee planet-wide peace.
>
> "Fifthly, to contribute to preserving life on the planet and the salvation of the human race".

That is the political will and testament of Comandante Hugo Chávez Frías.

To echo the slogan that our people are chanting today in the streets, factories, schools and universities, and fields, and to the four winds of the entire immensity of Venezuela: "Chávez lives on! The struggle continues! Onward to victory!"

The Acting President: We have thus concluded the tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, late President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The Acting President: I now draw the attention of the General Assembly to a note by the Secretary-General, contained in document A/67/784, circulated under sub-item (g) of agenda item 20, "Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its twelfth special session".

Members will recall that the Assembly concluded the consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 20 at its 61st plenary meeting, on 21 December 2012. In order for the Assembly to take action on the document, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of sub-item (g) or agenda item 20. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen sub-item (g) of agenda item 20?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Members will further recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 21 September 2012, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item 20 and its sub-items (a) to (i) to the Second Committee.

In order to enable the General Assembly to take action expeditiously on the document, may I also take it that the Assembly wishes to consider sub-item (g) of agenda item 20 directly in plenary meeting and proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 20 (*continued*)

Sustainable development

(g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its twelfth special session

Note by the Secretary-General (A/67/784)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take action on the draft resolution contained in the annex

to document A/67/784. The draft resolution is being presented as follow-up to paragraph 88 (a) of resolution 66/288, and more specifically to paragraph 4 (b) of resolution 67/213, through which the General Assembly mandated the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme to make a recommendation on its designation to reflect its universal character.

Pursuant to that mandate, the first universal membership session of the United Nations Environment Programme Governing Council adopted decision 27/2, through which Member States decided on the recommended designation and the transmission of a draft resolution to be considered by the General Assembly. The text, adopted as an annex to decision 27/2, is before the General Assembly today.

I should like to clarify that the draft resolution recommended for adoption by the Governing Council is not presented in the context of the report of the Council. The Governing Council's report will be transmitted to the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session through the Economic and Social Council, for consideration by the Second Committee in accordance with resolution 2997 (XXVII).

The Assembly will now take action on the draft resolution contained in the annex to document A/67/784, entitled "Change of the designation of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution contained in the annex to document A/67/784?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 67/251).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Dunlop (Brazil): The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) was a milestone in moving sustainable development forward. The many processes launched by Rio+20 will ensure that we have both the substantive tools — the sustainable development goals (SDGs) — and the institutional framework — the high-level political forum and the strengthened United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) — to guide our enhanced efforts towards sustainable development.

Brazil is pleased to see the several Rio+20 processes moving forward, with the beginning of the open-ended working group on the SDGs, the ongoing consultations on the high-level political forum, and the establishment of the Expert Committee on a Sustainable Development Financing Strategy, the workshops on technology transfer and today, in particular, the implementation of paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 outcome document (resolution 66/288, annex) on the strengthening of UNEP.

For Brazil, strengthening UNEP was one of the main outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference. We recognize that we cannot achieve sustainable development without a strong environmental pillar. We commend in this regard the decision of the universal Governing Council of UNEP to implement the agreement reached by our heads of State and Government in Rio last year. We also welcome the recommendation made by the UNEP Governing Council to change its designation in order to reflect its universal character. We note, however, that the change of name is only part of the broader agreement reached in Nairobi last month. In that regard, we would like to offer the following comments on the direct submission of the draft decisions of the Governing Council to the plenary of the General Assembly for consideration.

We would like to recall that, in accordance with resolution 67/213, the report of the first universal session of the Governing Council was due for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, in the fall. We would have preferred for normal practices to be respected, which would entail consideration of the report by the Economic and Social Council and subsequently by the Second Committee of the General Assembly. The recommendation on the change of designation would then be reflected in the draft resolution submitted annually by the Group of 77 and China on the report of UNEP at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

Bearing this in mind, we stress that the adoption today of the recommendation contained in the annex to the Secretary-General's note (A/67/784) must not set a precedent, which would undermine the normal practice of consideration of the renamed Governing Council report from now on.

Mrs. Irman (Indonesia): First of all, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Indonesia, I extend our deepest condolences to the Government and the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on the passing of His Excellency Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

On the consideration of the note by the Secretary-General (A/67/784) circulated under sub-item (g) of agenda item 20, we would like to raise our concerns as a matter of principle.

First, with regard to the procedural matter, we are convened in this plenary meeting under sub-item (g) of agenda item 20, entitled "Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its twelfth special session", as a result of a decision taken by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at its 2012 meeting. In this regard, I fail to see how the note that being considered today, the annex of which contains the decision of the Governing Council of UNEP taken just last month (resolution 67/251), could be procedurally relevant.

Secondly, with regard to the subject matter, the decision to change the designation of the Governing Council of UNEP and its relation to the follow-up of the outcome document (resolution 66/288, annex) of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which is stipulated in resolution 67/213, I would like to reiterate in its entirety the provision contained in paragraph 4 (b) of the resolution. This means that it is not acceptable to pick and choose one element of the whole decision of the twenty-seventh Governing Council of UNEP for adoption. It is our preference that the entire decision to implement paragraph 66 of the Rio+20 outcome document be reflected.

Ms. Vu Minh Thuy (Viet Nam): I would like to take the floor to state that we are pleased to see the adoption of resolution 67/251, changing the designation of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme.

Through our negotiation process at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Member States reached an agreement to strengthen the role and enhance the status of UNEP as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda. We see the resolution adopted today as an exercise of that commitment, with the confidence that the new designation of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP will strengthen the governance of that body and enhance its responsiveness and accountability to Member States.

The Acting President: May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to conclude its consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 20?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.68

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

68th plenary meeting
Monday, 25 March 2013, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Kanda (Ghana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 114 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade

Commemorative meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on agenda item 114 and adopted resolution 67/108, entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade" at its 58th plenary meeting, on 17 December 2012.

It is my pleasure to offer these remarks on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, who is on official travel. He has asked me to convey his deep regret at not being able to join us today.

We are here to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. I would like to recognize the role of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Group of African States for their sustained commitment to this annual commemoration.

This is the sixth occasion on which we have marked this sombre day, following the adoption of resolution 62/122 in 2007. The International Day of Remembrance focuses the world's attention on the unprecedented horror of the slave trade, providing us all with an opportunity to collectively and solemnly reflect on the seemingly limitless scope of man's inhumanity to man.

It is almost unimaginable that an estimated 15 million people were forcibly removed from the African continent in the four centuries between 1500 and 1900. The suffering of every man, woman and child will forever rest on the conscience of humanity. We should all be aware that the profound social and economic inequality, hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice that many people of African descent around the world continue to endure today is a distressing and stubborn legacy of that heinous trade in human beings.

The theme of this year's remembrance is "Forever Free: Celebrating Emancipation". It pays tribute to those courageous men and women of all colours who worked so tirelessly to focus public opinion on the fact that the slave trade was depraved and immoral, a corruption of the human spirit. It was the determination and steadfast conviction of all those people who campaigned for abolition to whom we owe so much today.

It was a long and arduous journey to freedom. One of the most significant steps was the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade by Britain in 1807. A young member of Parliament, William Wilberforce, saw early on what the world did not — the brutal inhumanity of slavery and the morally indefensible notion that one man

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could own the flesh and blood of another. Addressing the British House of Commons in 1789 about the barbaric conditions in which slaves were transported, he said:

> "So much misery condensed in so little room is more than the human imagination has ever before conceived."

Wilberforce dedicated much of his life to securing the right to freedom of all men, but he died before the ultimate goal of the abolition of slavery was achieved. It took more than 50 years before the Emancipation Proclamation was signed by United States President Abraham Lincoln. Today, we solemnly remember those millions who did not live to enjoy the freedom for which people like Wilberforce, Lincoln and so many unsung heroes fought.

Resolution 62/122 was adopted in 2007 to create a permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade and to acknowledge the tragedy and enduring consequences of the enslavement of African peoples.

I welcome the efforts made by CARICOM, the African Group and the Permanent Memorial Committee, led by the Permanent Representative of Jamaica, to realize the cenotaph to the millions whose freedom was forcibly taken. The Office of the President of the General Assembly stands ready to assist this noble and necessary project in any way it can.

It is fitting that the resolution calls not only for a permanent and physical reminder of the slave trade, but also for a programme to mobilize educational institutions and civil society to teach future generations about the causes, consequences and lessons of the transatlantic slave trade.

While reflecting on this dark period of the history of subjugation, we also need to acknowledge that the unspeakable horror of slavery persists, albeit in different forms, in the twenty-first century. In honouring those people who worked for the emancipation of enslaved peoples, let us work to protect and promote human rights today. Forced labour and child labour, the trafficking of persons, the recruitment of child soldiers and the sexual exploitation of women have all been identified by the United Nations as contemporary forms of slavery.

Thankfully, modern enslavement is not as systematic or institutionalized as its historic form, but nevertheless its very existence is a grave blemish on the natural law of mankind. It is also in contravention of article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which declares freedom from slavery as an internationally recognized human right.

Such crimes are frequently clandestine, so it is difficult to gauge where and how they are committed and, correspondingly, to take appropriate action to punish the perpetrators and eliminate their grotesque practice. The majority of the people who suffer belong to the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalized social groups in society. Fear and the need to survive may explain why victims rarely speak out.

This meeting of nations of the General Assembly, this great pantheon of hope for humankind, must play an active role to ensure that slavery is ultimately eradicated once and for all time.

The brave men and women who championed the emancipation of slaves throughout history are being recognized today. They transformed their strongly held beliefs in the freedom of mankind into stirring words and those words, into epoch-making deeds. I would like to end by quoting one of the world's most celebrated emancipators, President Abraham Lincoln. He said: "Whenever I hear anyone arguing over slavery, I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally". I am of the firm belief that those words were as relevant when he uttered them in 1865 as they are today.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon.

The Secretary-General: I am pleased to welcome representatives to this solemn meeting of the General Assembly. This gathering is the culmination of a series of powerful remembrances at the United Nations. I thank all those who have made these events possible. I am especially grateful to the National Ballet of Cameroon for joining us today.

We are here to recall the struggle of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade. We remember their degradation and deaths, and we teach future generations to remember as well.

This month, the United Nations is honoured to host the original copy of the United States Emancipation Proclamation. Delegations will find it just outside this Hall. I myself have seen the very historic Emancipation Proclamation, which was signed by President Abraham Lincoln. We are displaying it along with moving panels on the horrors that slaves endured and the bravery

of those who resisted. The names of resisters and abolitionists are passed down through history. On this day, we also listen to the voices of the nameless victims. Their message is transmitted in the music and poetry of Africans on the continent and in the diaspora. We hear the voices of the victims in the stories and scholarship of writers. We hear them in the work of young people who study the past to create a better future.

The United Nations has many reasons to celebrate this day. Our Charter, at its core, opposes racism and upholds equality. Our activities throughout the world support those goals, and we operate in many countries that still bear the scars of the transatlantic slave trade.

This Headquarters is located just a short distance from the African burial ground in downtown Manhattan. The remains of 419 people lie there. Countless other slaves were buried on this very island that we call home. Today we remember the tears that were shed on both sides of the Atlantic.

This week we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of the great poet Aimé Césaire. He once wrote: "Beware of crossing your arms in the sterile attitude of a spectator, because life is not a spectacle." I agree — we must be more than spectators. While we recall slavery's horrors, we must also address the lingering consequences. While we remember the victims, we pledge to fight for equality, justice and peace. That is the most meaningful way to honour their memory.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Chad, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Allam-mi (Chad): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States. Today, as we observe the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade under the theme "Forever Free: Celebrating Emancipation", the African Group joins other Member States and the international community in honouring and remembering those who suffered or died at the hands of the brutal system of slavery. We also join them in raising awareness about the dangers of racism and marked prejudice.

We join in the many celebrations across the United States honouring the 150 years of the Emancipation Proclamation. Issued by President Abraham Lincoln on 1 January 1863 as the American nation entered the third year of the civil war, the Proclamation declared that all those enslaved in Confederate territory to be forever free. That was the bloodiest day of combat in American history. It was perceived as a Union victory that gave Lincoln the courage to take the first step towards ending slavery and promoting fairness, opportunity and equality. Although ratified two years later, the Emancipation Proclamation galvanized the Union's war effort, turning the struggle into one to end slavery as much as to preserve the Union.

The Emancipation Proclamation also made it possible for free black men to join the Union cause. Nearly 200,000 such men served in the Union's army and navy by the end of the war. In 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified, giving African-American men the right to vote. Although 1 January 1863 was a significant day for the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, it was also notable for something else. It was the day that the Homestead Act, which allowed people to claim ownership of federal land, took effect.

As we honour the date of the Emancipation Proclamation, the events taking place across the country provide the opportunity for the American community to engage in dialogue about the emancipation still to be realized by too many people in their societies, in addition to celebrating the progress made.

Marking the anniversary is a way to encourage a conversation about all the work that remains to be done in order to create complete equality and liberty. The African Group believes that the Emancipation Proclamation remains one of the greatest documents of human freedom. It was a milestone on the way to abolishing slavery nationwide forever. The African Group remembers the tears and the joy of men and women that accompanied that first reading of the Emancipation Proclamation. Those men and women, who, through their resilience, hard work and struggle for freedom, equality and unity, agitating for their own freedom over the decades through protests, revolts, prayers and perseverance, compelled the United States Government to declare that they and their descendants would be forever free.

As we celebrate the International Day of Remembrance, we should also pay tribute to the emancipation of slaves in nations across the world. This year is particularly important, with many key anniversaries, including 220 years since France's General Emancipation decree liberated all slaves in

present-day Haiti. It is 180 years since the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 ended slavery in Canada, the British West Indies and the Cape of Good Hope. The Indian Slavery Act of 1843 was signed 170 years ago. Slavery was also abolished in France 165 years ago, in Argentina 160 years ago, in the Dutch colonies 150 years ago and in Brazil 125 years ago.

For us as Africans and for people of African descent, slavery and the transatlantic slave trade are crimes against humanity. They represent a painful legacy of abuse, discrimination and exploitation. Slavery remains one of the most horrific and brutal chapters in the history of humankind. Its scars on the continent and in the diaspora are deep, taking the form of social and economic inequality, intolerance, racism, exclusion and discrimination. The transatlantic slave trade must never be repeated or forgotten. We value the wisdom of events such as this to act as both a reminder and a warning.

The African Group believes that much more remains to be done to ensure not only that the slave trade of the past is not repeated but also that its modern equivalents in the form of human trafficking and sex slavery do not take root. We therefore appeal for the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat on Trafficking in Persons (resolution 64/293), the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, its review and its tenth anniversary.

The African Group reaffirms its support for and commitment to sustaining a lasting outreach effort in the erection of a permanent memorial to and in remembrance of the victims of slavery and the slave trade. We further recognize the importance and the necessity of sustained voluntary contributions in order to achieve the goal of erecting the permanent memorial in a timely manner. In that regard, the African Group would like to thank and congratulate all those countries that have contributed to that worthy project. We invite other nations to do so too.

In conclusion, the African Group would like to commend the joint efforts since 2007 of the steering committee, comprising States members of the African Group and the Caribbean Community together with staff of the Department of Public Information, to mark the annual commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. We also commend international community's contribution to that goal.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Qatar, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Laram (Qatar): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States. I would like to thank the steering committee of States members of the Caribbean Community and the African Group and the United Nations Secretariat for their hard work in organizing the commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. This occasion is an important opportunity to educate and to remind the international community and, more important, our youth about the importance of the Day. A tribute is also due to those who have worked hard and continue to exert great efforts to abolish the various forms of modern-day slavery around the world.

About 17 million people were transported against their will from Africa to North, Central and South America during the sixteenth century and up until the nineteenth century. Millions more died while being transported to the Americas. As we remember the transatlantic slave trade that took the lives of more than 15 million men, women and children, let us also honour those persons who demonstrated great courage and moral conviction in resisting and fighting for justice.

An estimated 2.5 million people are victims of contemporary forms of slavery. Men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers and find themselves enslaved in forced labour and sexual exploitation. As we reflect on the injustices and tragedy of the past, let us also take a moment to recognize the forms of slavery that persist in our world today and honour the victims of the transatlantic slave trade by redoubling our efforts to protect the rights and dignity of all persons and dedicate greater commitment to the elimination of today's slave-like practices, including human trafficking, intolerance, xenophobia, racial discrimination, forced labour and related injustice.

In closing, new generations must be made conscious of the commitment necessary to move past all forms of slavery so that we can begin celebrating the theme of this year's commemoration, "Forever Free".

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Grenada, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Ms. Williams (Grenada): The delegation of Grenada has the honour to speak on behalf of the

Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC) on the 2013 observance of the International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, under the theme: "Forever Free: Celebrating Emancipation".

On this day each year, this body pays its respects to those who were forcibly taken from their homes and families against their will and transported across the Atlantic Ocean under the most inhumane conditions known to humankind. The Atlantic Ocean became the final resting place of thousands of souls who perished along the way. Those who survived this infamous horror, known as the Middle Passage, landed in ports throughout Latin America and the Caribbean into an existence of forced labour and systemic cruelty which lasted for generations. In large measure, entire economies in much of what is now known as the developed world were literally built on the backs of this involuntary African labour. May such an acknowledged crime against humankind never be repeated in any form or manifestation in any part of our globe.

Emerging from this unparalleled tragedy in the history of our planet was the liberation of the many African men, women and children who had endured the torment, torture and attempted dehumanization and who fought against considerable odds to gain their freedom. Those persons and their descendants — people like myself — are those who the great Jamaican thinker Bob Marley referred to as "the survivors".

Yet the struggle for full and absolute emancipation remains a continuing endeavour and reparations are necessary to fully heal humankind from the brutality of the period when chattel slavery was forced and perpetuated upon a particular segment of humankind.

Part of this emancipation, this freedom, was achieved first in Haiti in 1804. That set in motion the movement for freedom from bondage in other parts of the Caribbean and our wider Latin American region, as well as in North America, Europe and beyond. At this juncture, we cannot lose sight of the fact that in a number of regions, including the subregion of the Caribbean, emancipation ushered in the era of colonialism, which in many respects merely perpetuated a refined form of what had formerly prevailed. Thus, the anti-colonial struggle was born, in earnest, as a logical outgrowth of the anti-slavery emancipation struggle and serves as a constant reminder that full emancipation did not end with the abolition of chattel slavery.

The Group of Latin America and the Caribbean States takes note of the August 2012 report of the Secretary-General (A/67/255), which outlines the implementation of the outreach programme and steps to enhance global awareness of the activities associated with the commemoration. In that connection, we express our appreciation to the Department of Public Information for the organization of the historical briefing held last year. We also recall the successful exhibit here at United Nations Headquarters in conjunction with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Yale University Press, the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., and many other institutions.

We further commend the organizers for the 2012 showing of the documentary film on post-emancipation slavery, the broadcast of radio programmes on the slave trade and the student video conference, which made connections among young people whose societies were linked to the transatlantic slave trade and some that were not. We wish to also acknowledge with admiration the important work of UNESCO with its successful "Slave Route Project: resistance, freedom, heritage" and, most recently, with the production of the educational film *A Story Not to Be Forgotten*. GRULAC wishes to thank UNESCO.

We are especially appreciative of the events this year, including the panel discussion with eminent scholars, including Ms. Françoise Vergès and Mr. Ali Mazrui. We are grateful for the global student video conference again this year, the film screening of the movie *Lincoln*, the presentation and book signing, the cultural and culinary evening, and the dynamic concert last Friday night.

At the national level in our countries, a number of initiatives have been undertaken in furtherance of a dissemination of information on the slave trade and its gruesome historical legacy. In this connection, the work of El Salvador in the integration of the issue of slavery into the social science curriculum of the education system is to be highly commended. The work of Jamaica is to be especially highlighted in promoting awareness of the rich historical and cultural expressions and through the various artistic, literary, scholarly and other programmes carried out by an array of governmental and civil society bodies.

The Group endorses the leadership role played by Jamaica and other States members of GRULAC,

including my own country, Grenada, and of the Caribbean Community, in close collaboration with the member States of the African Group, in relation to the development of the permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. In that connection, the member States of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States encourage other Member States, international institutions and other relevant parties within the international community to continue and further enhance their voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund established to facilitate the completion of this universal permanent memorial project.

In conclusion, GRULAC member States join with the wider international community in commemorating this important day, which observes the struggle and subsequent achievements of the people who were emancipated. It is indeed a day of celebration, but it is also a day for us to take stock and to deepen our resolve to tackle the contemporary challenges of inequality, poverty, colonialism and more — all of which have their antecedents in the mindset that held one race superior and another inferior. This concept must be thoroughly discredited and abandoned, even in its most contemporary forms.

Freedom won must be constantly protected. The world today and every day can count on Latin America and the Caribbean in this noble pursuit.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Finland, who will speak on behalf of the Western European and other States Group.

Mr. Viinanen (Finland): I have the pleasure to speak on behalf of the Western European and other States Group.

Slavery is one of the most heinous attacks against human rights and human dignity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights explicitly states that no one shall be held in slavery or servitude. Slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

The transatlantic slave trade — to whose victims we are today paying our solemn respect — is one of the horrific memories of our shared history. The dehumanization of countless victims of the slave trade and their untold suffering stands out as an epic injustice.

Unfortunately, slavery is not only a scourge of the past. Victims of human trafficking are the modern slaves of our times. One of the best ways to pay tribute to the victims of the transatlantic slave trade is to redouble our efforts to end the contemporary forms of slavery.

In addition to remembering the crimes of the slave trade and the victims of all forms of slavery, the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade serves as a powerful reminder that much remains to be done to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We need to use all instruments available. Comprehensive sets of national measures are the best way to promote equality within States. The importance of human rights education and ending impunity are essential in this global fight in which the international community must stand united.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): Today we pay tribute to the millions whose lives were cruelly damaged and the millions lost as a result of the transatlantic slave trade. Men, women and children were forced into bondage. This destroyed lives, families and societies.

The slave trade was a business of monumental proportions. Conservative estimates put the total numbers exiled from the African homeland at between 10 and 12 million. By the time the American civil war broke out in 1861, the largest enslaved population in the world lived in the United States. That period is one of the most painful chapters in my country's history. We acknowledge and honour the long fight for freedom that is so central to the experience of all Americans, in particular those who fought to end this repugnant practice on our shores.

One hundred and fifty years ago, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which removed the chains of slavery and declared all people enslaved in the rebellious States then, thenceforward and forever free. The Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution abolished slavery once and for all in the United States. We are proud that those documents are now on display at the United Nations.

The Emancipation Proclamation was an act of justice extraordinary for its time and legacy. Its promises were not fulfilled on a single occasion. Americans struggled to fulfil the principles of our founders stated clearly

in our Constitution — that all women and men would be granted the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In the achievements of the civil rights movement, and in many other ways, the United States worked to rise above the legacy of slavery. We have sought to protect the right of every person to fundamental freedoms.

Our work is far from complete at home or abroad. Today, we are witness to human trafficking, which President Obama has called a debasement of our common humanity. More than 20 million men, women and children are victims of human trafficking, without recourse to protection or justice. Together, we can bring traffickers to justice, empower survivors to reclaim their rightful freedom and end this scourge once and for all.

Let us bear witness to the past in which basic rights were denied, and let us build a future in which no form of human slavery exists, a future in which all men and women can live in dignity and freedom.

The Acting President: Before proceeding further, I should like to consult members with a view to inviting to Mr. Ali Mazrui, Director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies at Binghamton University, State University of New York, to make a statement on this occasion. If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, without setting a precedent, to invite Mr. Ali Mazrui, Director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies at Binghamton University, State University of New York, to make a statement at this commemorative meeting?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Ali Mazrui, Director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies at Binghamton University, State University of New York.

Mr. Mazrui (Institute of Global Cultural Studies at Binghamton University, State University of New York): It is a great honour to have been invited to participate in this capacity for this particular kind of experience in world history. I was very grateful to those who extended the invitation to me. I would like to dedicate my remarks today to someone who died as we were to meet for this commemoration: Chinua Achebe, the distinguished son of Africa and Nigeria and a crusader for cultural emancipation.

The Emancipation Proclamation was issued by United States President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. The idea was to free slaves. At that time, the deeper standard was not the freeing of all slaves in the Union but the freeing of the slaves in the Confederate States of the South. However, the Emancipation Proclamation began the actual process of abolishing slavery. That process was accelerated with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, in 1865.

The international consequences of the Emancipation Proclamation are also significant. In the earlier part of the American Civil War, the Confederates hoped for its internationalization in their favour. Either France or Great Britain was expected to intervene for as long as the Civil War was simply about saving the American Union and not about abolishing slavery. But the Emancipation Proclamation turned the Civil War into a crusade against slavery. Such a crusade made British and French intervention politically impossible. That gave Abraham Lincoln a freer hand to pursue the objectives both of saving the Union and of freeing the slaves.

On the other hand, in the Civil War on the Union side the conflict became multiracial as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation. When black Americans were invited to join Lincoln's armed forces, approximately 180,000 responded by 26 August 1863. Lincoln would make the following observation in a letter about that time: "The emancipation policy and the use of coloured troops constitute the heaviest blow yet dealt to the rebellion".

In February 1865, as the Civil War was coming to an end, Lincoln was ready to say the following to Francis B. Carpenter, the portrait painter. He said that the Proclamation was "the central act of my Administration and the greatest event of the nineteenth century".

A great part of the abolitionist movement in Great Britain was a case of white folks fighting for the emancipation of black folks. The white activists of Great Britain engaged in trying to free the slaves in the British colonies but, again, it was a matter of white activists and black beneficiaries. However, in the American Civil War, the final stage included the agency of the oppressed. Black soldiers participated in emancipating black slaves.

I would just like to say a further word about the British side of that experience, because the British took the lead in the abolitionist movement on the oceans and

elsewhere. Members have already heard today about the role of William Wilberforce, who was a close friend of future Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger. They became friends when both were in Cambridge as students. However, the Slavery Abolition Act was not passed until 1833, one month after Wilberforce's death.

Today is 25 March. However, there was another 25 March more then 200 years ago. On 25 March 1807, a bill to abolish the slave trade in the British West Indies was passed in the House of Commons in London. At that time, France was torn between the new legacy of the French Revolution and the rising ambition of French expansionism. The French Revolution had aspirations to liberty, equality and fraternity. On the other hand, the French imperial role aspired to dominance and cultural supremacy.

One French colony symbolized both the revolutionary spirit and the rebellion against imperialism. That colony in the West Indies was soon to make world history. It soon adopted its former name of Haiti. The Haitian revolution was an epoch-making event in history because of what it did not for Haiti but for world history. Haiti today is only marginally better off than it was 200 years ago but, in general, its impact on the rest of the world was quite significant.

If we look at the broader consequences of the Haitian revolution, it even contributed to the gradual British trend towards abolition. The use of the British navy on the high seas to enforce the ban on the slave trade was partly motivated by the British desire to weaken France in its economic and colonial ambitions.

The Haitian revolution also dealt a major blow to Napoleon's dream of building an Atlantic empire for France. Napoleon decided to concentrate instead on his ambitions in Europe. He sold large tracts of land in North America to finance his European adventures. In the midst of the Haitian revolution, France decided to sell Louisiana. Its purchase was finalized in 1803. The purchase contributed to the expansion of the United States not only in itself but also by further facilitating American expansion to Texas and westward.

Both the French Revolution of 1789 and the Haitian revolution, not long after, fuelled slave revolts in other countries. More than 20 slave revolts in the greater Caribbean flared up between 1789 and 1832. Particularly noticeable were the large-scale rebellions in Barbados in 1816 and in Jamaica in 1831. Those revolts and the Haitian revolution abolishing slavery in Haiti were the largest slave uprisings in the history of the Americas.

We learn about the past partly to influence the present. There are millions of slaves in the world today. We should therefore learn from the past in order to abolish the contemporary slave trade.

There are also positive aspects of the legacies of the past. Where has the torch of emancipation been passed? It has been handed over to the following: the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., in the twentieth-century history of the United States of America; the legacy of Nelson Mandela, in the twentieth and twenty-first century history of Africa; the new legacy of the first black President of the United States of America; the legacy of changing circumstances in the Vatican, in which we have today the first pope from Latin America, the Pope of the poor, the first non-European pope in more than 1,000 years; the unfolding Arab Spring, with Arabs in pursuit of democratization and popular participation; the emerging presence in the world of China, India and Brazil as new actors in global decision-making; Europe in search of a new economic and fiscal order; women from all over the world pursuing vindication, empowerment and equality; the green movement in defence of planet Earth and in pursuit of the quality of life; and the United Nations and its specialized agencies in search of greater effectiveness in protecting peace and promoting social justice. Those are constructive legacies of the past, sometimes indirectly and sometimes directly influenced by the massive global contribution made by slaves in different parts of the world and the participation of abolitionists. We do not know directly which part influenced which part, but certainly the entire human race has been affected by the slave trade, by the institution of slavery and by the abolition of those evils after they had contributed to economic construction of the world.

Let me conclude simply by wishing all Christians a sacred Easter and all Jews a sacred Passover, and by asking all of us to join Muslims in praying for Syria. Let us join other religions in their joint pursuit of peace.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded the commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to conclude its consideration of agenda item 114?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.69

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

69th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 26 March 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Kanda (Ghana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Zillur Rahman, President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The Acting President: Before we proceed to the items on our agenda, it is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Zillur Rahman, President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, who passed away on 20 March 2013.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I request the representative of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to convey our condolences to the Government and the people of Bangladesh and to the bereaved family of His Excellency Mr. Zillur Rahman.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Zillur Rahman.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excelelncy Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I am honoured to be here to pay tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Zillur Rahman, who served as President of Bangladesh since 2009. He was one of Bangladesh's most respected statesmen, with over 50 years of dedicated service to the country and its people. He was elected as the fifteenth President in 2009 and made important contributions to the country's democratic transition throughout his political life. I share the sadness of his bereaved family and the Government and the people of Bangladesh.

My heart also goes out to the families who lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods as a result of the tornado that struck the Brahmanbaria district this past Friday. That is one more reminder of the vulnerability of the people of Bangladesh to climate change, a vulnerability we all increasingly share.

However, despite such sad news, the people of Bangladesh have many reasons to feel positive about their future, and the late President can rest proud in the knowledge that his country has advanced dramatically since independence, 38 years ago. Bangladesh is setting an example in building resilience and disaster preparedness. It is a leader on sustainable development and in seeing great progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

More and more boys and girls are attending school. The maternal and child mortality rate is dropping. The country is strengthening social protection and improving public services, including sanitation and fresh water. Bangladesh has long been a pioneer in microcredit, and its economy is thriving. As a result, Bangladesh is on track to graduate from the ranks of the least developed countries.

Bangladesh is also a leader in women's empowerment. I am particularly proud of the efforts of the Bangladeshi women police officers who serve

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with United Nations peacekeeping missions. They show the women and men in the countries where they serve that there is nothing that a woman cannot do. Women's empowerment is a top priority for me. The women of Bangladesh, from its Prime Minister, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, to its police officers, are in the vanguard.

Of course, Bangladesh continues to face serious challenges. Population growth, inequality, rising food and energy prices and the need to create decent jobs for young people will all continue to test the country. So, too, will the challenges of democracy and the reconciliation, healing and justice related to the struggle for independence.

President Rahman believed in independence for Bangladesh. He worked for that and was one of the country's leading political figures. His reward in his final years was the presidency — an acknowledgement of a lifetime of dedication. Today, we mourn his loss but take comfort in the fact that the country that he helped to found is growing stronger by the day.

The Acting President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of Chad, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Allam-mi (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I speak on behalf of the African Group at this solemn event of the General Assembly to pay tribute to the vivid memory of His Excellency Mr. Zillur Rahman, President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, who has just departed from us. The African Group honours the memory of a person who, with courage and self-sacrifice, made an invaluable contribution to the democratization and the economic and social development of his country throughout his exemplary political life.

On this solemn occasion, the African Group, through my modest person, offers its deep condolences to the family of the late President Rahman, as well as to the Government and the people of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on the great loss. The Group also expresses its sympathy during these days of sadness and grief that they are experiencing. May the soul of the deceased rest in peace.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Laram (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, allow me to extend our sincere condolences on the passing of the President of Bangladesh, Mr. Mohammad Zillur Rahman. I would also like to express our sorrow to his bereaved family and to the Government and the people of the Republic of Bangladesh. Our heartfelt sympathy also goes to His Excellency Ambassador Mr. Abdul Momen, Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations, and to his staff. We hope that Allah may give them strength after the tragic loss.

The late President was a leader of strong principles and devotion. His commitment to moving his country forward and to improving the living standards of his fellow citizens manifested itself since he was a student. His first steps in serving his country occurred in 1952, when he played a vital role in the language movement. His political commitment became more apparent when he participated in the 1971 liberation war.

When he joined the Awami League, he already had a vision of the role that his country should play at the regional and international levels. From the time that he was elected a Member of Parliament in 1973, and later as President of Bangladesh in 2009, he showed a strong resolve to foster equality among his fellow citizens and to promote the principles of democracy and social justice.

His track record shows how keen he was to improve the living conditions of the have-nots among his own people and to promote the culture of solidarity among the various strata of Bengali society. To achieve those lofty goals, he set out to deal with a number of pressing issues, such as population growth, food shortage, sustainable development, the fight against poverty and the empowerment of women.

During his political career, Bangladesh became a Member of the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China. Thanks to his vision and leadership, Bangladesh enjoyed good relations with its neighbouring countries and increased its cooperation with South Asia and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Moreover, his strong commitment to promoting international peace and security turned his country into one of the leading nations that play a vital role in the various United Nations peacekeeping missions. As such, Bangladesh has had a leading role in

peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, Somalia, Rwanda, Mozambique and Kosovo.

What makes the late President's trajectory a source of inspiration for generations to come in his country and elsewhere is the fact that the hardship that he faced during different periods of his life did not affect his resolve to steer his country towards prosperity and progress and to it taking its rightful place in the international community. His life was not without difficulties and sorrow. He was jailed twice during his struggle and suffered a great loss when his wife and fellow combatant, Mrs. Ivy Rahman, was murdered in 2004.

The Asia-Pacific Group reiterates its deep sorrow on the loss of a visionary man, whose wisdom and leadership will be missed and remembered.

We wish the people of Bangladesh well in the future and reaffirm the Asia-Pacific Group's commitment to working in close cooperation with his successor. May he rest in peace.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Moldova, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Lupan (Republic of Moldova): On behalf of the Eastern European Group, allow me to convey our deepest and heartfelt condolences to the grieving family of His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Zillur Rahman, to the Acting President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and to the Government and the people of Bangladesh on the passing away of President Rahman.

The late President was regarded as a respected political figure of Bangladesh who gained the respect of the political forces inside his country and outside alike. He was one of the veteran organizers of the creation of Bangladesh from 1971 and the key personality in defending and consolidating the country's democratic evolution.

Thanks to his dedication and loyalty to the progress of his country, he succeeded in improving the welfare of citizens and in increasing their quality of life, including by strongly promoting regional economic integration in South Asia. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recognized the contribution of the late President Rahman, saying on the day that the leader of Bangladesh passed away that the late President Mohammad Zillur Rahman had made important contributions to the country's democratic transition throughout his political life. We support such an appraisal.

It is an irrevocable loss for the country of Bangladesh and for its people. His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Zillur Rahman will be remembered in his homeland and abroad. May he rest in peace.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saint Lucia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Ms. Louis (Saint Lucia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group to pay tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Zillur Rahman, the late President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. We honour a man who was widely revered and hardly reviled, who rose from a mere member to the highest office of the State and who participated actively in the watersheds in Bangladesh's political history. As a career politician, he was eminently equipped to be part of a process that consistently emphasized the primacy of democratic order in the country. He embodied an unyielding dedication to the people of Bangladesh. Although he endured trials and challenges during his long and distinguished public service, he always overcame them and emerged even more determined to uphold the cause of the masses.

President Zillur Rahman was born of a generation whose resolute allegiance to democracy and its ideals inspired a nation to fight a liberation war in 1971. Forty-two years to the day, we pay homage to the man who was an active participant in the establishment of his country as an independent nation. He is survived by his children, his legacy, the dignity that he brought to politics, his steady compassion and his unflinching courage. His was always the spirit of a determined fighter for democracy. May that spirit endure in the people of Bangladesh as an indelible honour to a patriotic statesman.

The States members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group offer their sympathies to the family of the late President Rahman and mourn with the people of Bangladesh during this sad time.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Finland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Taalas (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Western European and other States Group.

I would like to convey our deepest condolences to the people and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on the sad passing away of their Head of State, His Excellency President Mohammad Zillur Rahman.

President Rahman had a long and highly regarded career in Bangladesh politics, earning recognition and respect at home and beyond the country's borders. He was already active during Bangladesh's path to independence. Later on, Mr. Rahman's engagement was essential in shaping the country's development towards democracy.

Mr. Rahman was an avid supporter of regional economic integration in South Asia. Due to his and his colleagues' devotion and hard work, Bangladesh can today offer its citizens improved standards of living and a brighter outlook for the future. Bangladesh also stands strong internationally and remains one of the mainstays of United Nations peacekeeping globally.

Our thoughts and sympathies are with the family and friends of the late President Rahman. We are confident that the people and the Government of Bangladesh will overcome the loss and work together to advance his vision.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the United States Government. We offer our condolences to the people and Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on the passing of His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Zillur Rahman, the late President of Bangladesh.

Today, Bangladesh marks the forty-second anniversary of its independence. It is therefore all the more proper, fitting and poignant that we gather here today to pay tribute to President Rahman, who dedicated his life to the nation that he loved. President Rahman's service to his country and his dedication to strengthening Bangladesh's democracystretch back to the country's struggle for independence, when he was a student and political activist. That struggle continued for decades, up to and including his term as President.

Today, on a day that unites all Bangladeshis, we honour President Rahman and offer our sincere sympathies to his family and the Bangladeshi people during this time of sadness.

Mr. Kohona (Sri Lanka): As a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the delegation of Sri Lanka, on behalf of its Government and its people, wishes to express its deepest condolences to the family and to the people and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on the passing away of the late President Mohammad Zillur Rahman.

Former President Rahman became prominent in the politics of the Bengali language movement and was a heroic actor in Bangladesh's liberation struggle. Every country produces a great leader at its most critical time. President Rahman was such a leader. He was instrumental in the creation of the Awami League party. As an active member of each of those movements, he contributed not only to the independence of Bangladesh but also to charting its new journey as an independent and democratic State. He was sent to jail in post-independence Bangladesh.

His vast reservoir of experience made him an astute politician and a party stalwart but, more important, a statesmen who was genuinely respected by his peers across the political spectrum. Deeply imbued with democratic ideals and values, he enriched the Awami League party.

The late President Rahman's stellar leadership qualities endeared him to the public. He was also actively involved in social development activities and environmental conservation. He remained committed to democratic politics despite losing his wife, a fellow Awami League member, to a terrorist attack in 2004. His passing away leaves a void not only in the Awami league party but also in Bangladesh's national political arena.

South Asia, too, has lost a leading statesman. However, we hope that his fine legacy will continue to inspire and serve the people of Bangladesh in the years to come.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): Today is 26 March, our Independence Day. On this very day in 1971, when the enemy forces let loose a genocide, we started a life of death and destruction, a life of hope and sorrows. However, after nine months of bloody war in which 3 million sacrificed their sacred lives and 10 million were forced to take shelter in the neighbouring country, India, after the carnage of the chastity of thousands of courageous females, and after the total eclipse of the economy and the destruction of the development sector of the country, we achieved our independence.

It is pathetic that two days prior to our victory, our intellectuals were rounded up and were all butchered blindfolded. Throughout the history of Bangladesh, therefore, our Independence Day is the observance of joy and sorrow together. While we rejoice in that victory, we cry for dear and near ones. No wonder Shelley very rightly mentioned, "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought".

This year, yet another sorrow has impinged on us to endure and commemorate with the passing away of our honourable President Mohammed Zillur Rahman, the most venerated political personality in our country after the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We have gathered here today with heavy hearts to reminisce about his life and achievements. I sincerely thank the President of the General Assembly, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and representatives of United Nations States Members for showing respect to this towering personality of Bangladesh.

President Rahman was born on 9 March 1928, and he died in the same month on 20 March 2013. He was 84 years of age. Born as a British Indian, he spent his youth struggling against injustice and died as a national hero. President Rahman was a beacon of light and wisdom. Because of his amiable disposition — a perfect gentleman in the truest sense of the term — he earned respect among all in a country where political polarization is acute and disturbing. He graduated with a Master in History and a law degree and started his career as a lawyer.

While he was a student, young Rahman participated in the historic Bengali language movement of 1952 when people shed blood to protect and preserve their mother language and, of course, culture and values. He was first elected as a member of Pakistan's National Parliament in 1970 and, during the Bangladesh liberation war, Mr. Rahman actively participated in the Bangladesh Government in exile. After the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in 1975, he was arrested by the military junta and spent four years in prison. Mr. Zillur Rahman served as a Cabinet Minister from 1996 through 2001. He was sworn in as the nineteenth President of Bangladesh on 12 February 2009, and he discharged his responsibilities until his death this year.

Mr. Rahman was elected as the General Secretary of his party for a record four times in the history of Bangladesh. After the debacle in Bangladesh on 11 January 2007, when the future of multiparty democracy and stability were at stake and when the nation was is total disarray, Mohammed Zillur Rahman rose to the occasion and took the lead and played a critical role in the restoration of democracy. His wisdom, experience, expertise and political maturity triumphed, and the nation felt a sigh of relief. No wonder he was elected President unopposed.

The sad news is that Mr. Rahman passed many valuable years of his life behind bars. He was arrested during our language movement and during our anti-military movements in the 1960s. A verdict was given for 20 years of prison time when he joined the liberation war, but nothing could shake his strong conviction. Sadly, his wife, Mrs. Ivy Rahman, President of the women's section of the Bangladesh Awami League party, was assassinated by a bomb blast at an anti-terrorism public rally in August 2004, along with 23 others. That attack was intended to kill the opposition leader at the time and current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was injured but survived.

President Rahman was a father figure full of wisdom and patience. I echo Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who rightly observed that "the country has lost a guardian". I believe we can really pay our homage to late President Zillur Rahman if we truly follow his mantra of friendship towards all and malice towards none, and if we truly follow his wisdom and maturity of working together, working for the good of humankind and for participatory democracy with commitment and determination. His departed soul will rest in eternal peace. May Allah bless his soul.

I thank the United Nations and I thank all the delegations once again for being with us at this very special event.

Agenda item 134 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/67/693/Add. 9)

The Acting President: I should like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/67/693/Add.9, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/67/693/Add.8, the Marshall Islands has made the payment necessary to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in that document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 121 (*continued*)

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(g) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries Draft resolution (A/67/L.54)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly held the debate on agenda item 121 and its sub-items (a) to (w) at its 40th plenary meeting, on 19 November 2012.

I now give the floor to the representative of Mozambique to introduce draft resolution A/67/L.54.

Mr. Gumende (Mozambique): On behalf of the member States of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP) — Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Portugal, Sao Tomé and Principe, Timor-Leste and my own country, Mozambique — I have the honour to introduce, under agenda item 121, draft resolution A/67/L.54, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries".

Encompassing 240 million people in eight countries and four continents, the CPLP is an organization determined to promote relations of multifaceted cooperation among its member States. The organization is at same time strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation with other States, as well as with regional and international organizations, including the United Nations and its agencies, funds and programmes. With the United Nations, the CPLP promotes cooperation in vital areas such as health, education, agriculture, public administration and technology, among others, contributing greatly to the economic and social development of our countries. Those cooperation initiatives make the United Nations one of the most relevant partners of the CPLP and its member States.

As part of its political coordination, the Community and its member States are deeply involved in developing efforts, with the United Nations and other regional and international partners, to restore the constitutional order, stability and respect for human rights and to strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law in Guinea-Bissau through an inclusive political process. In that respect, we welcome the appointment of His Excellency Mr. José Ramos-Horta, former President of Timor-Leste, as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau.

As we had the opportunity to inform Member States on 19 November 2012 (see A/67/PV.40), when the Assembly discussed the agenda item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations", this draft resolution is aimed at strengthening the cooperation between the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and the specialized agencies and other bodies and programmes of the United Nations.

The draft resolution highlights the measures adopted by the ninth Conference of Heads of State and Government of the CPLP, held in Maputo on 20 July 2012, in particular those aimed at strengthening the human right to adequate food in national and community policies and the objective of eradicating hunger and poverty in the CPLP through the deepening of political and diplomatic coordination and cooperation in all fields.

The draft resolution commends the efforts aimed at promoting the restoration of the constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau in the light of Security Council resolution 2048 (2012), and calls for the need to harmonize the positions of international partners, particularly the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the CPLP and European Union, with a view to a consensus-based, inclusive and nationally owned transition process.

Lastly, the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly, at its sixty-ninth session, a report on the implementation of the current draft resolution.

We would like therefore to kindly ask that the draft resolution be adopted without a vote.

In conclusion, allow me to express, on behalf of the CPLP member States, our deep appreciation to the countries that contributed to the text and those that sponsored the draft resolution.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.54.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in document A/67/L.54, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, Spain, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, the United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/67/L.54?

Draft resolution A/67/L.54 was adopted (resolution 67/252).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 121?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 31 and 107

Report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/67/715)

Report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/67/711)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh, former Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): On behalf of the members of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), I am pleased to present the report of the Commission on its sixth session (A/67/715). The report is organized around the main functions and work of the Commission and places particular emphasis on the results achieved and the challenges and opportunities related to the impact of the Commission in the field and its relations at Headquarters. It mainstreams the implementation of the relevant recommendations from the 2010 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture and incorporates a forward-looking agenda for 2013 as an implementation framework for the recommendations.

Allow me to highlight a number of issues from the report that are of particular importance.

First, there was particular focus on institutional consolidation during the reporting period, which is crucial for the Commission's future role and impact. The Commission launched an ambitious exercise to improve and clarify the Commission's working methods, especially as it relates to its linkage and collaboration with the work of key actors in the field. It also aimed at facilitating the workload of the Chairs of the country-specific configurations to achieve goals on the ground. That process was among the main highlights of the Commission's work in 2012.

Secondly, during the reporting period, the Commission embarked upon a work programme designed to support the Commission's engagement with the six countries on its agenda, namely, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The peacebuilding process in each of those countries is at a different stage, which presents different opportunities and poses different types of challenges.

Some highlights of the Commission's country-specific engagement during the reporting period included, first, the provision of support for the launching of a national reconciliation strategy and the first regional hub for security and justice in Liberia; secondly, support for the successful conduct of elections in Sierra Leone; thirdly, resource mobilization for the peacebuilding pillar of a new poverty-reduction strategy in Burundi, including through support for the successful organization of the Burundi partners' conference in Geneva in October 2012; and, fourthly, the initiation of a resource-mapping exercise in Guinea as an initial step in the eventual development of a national aid management and coordination system. I thank the leadership in those countries for their commitment and support, without which the Commission would not have been sufficiently effective in achieving its goals. Conversely, the disruption of the presidential electoral process through an unconstitutional change of Government in Guinea-Bissau on 12 April undermined the progress in peacebuilding that had begun to take

place in that country. That and, more important, the violence and instability witnessed in the Central African Republic, underline the fact that the role of the Commission has to be more comprehensive, targeted and well coordinated.

Second, in the absence of broader, more vigorous, dynamic and continuing national commitment, and without coordinated efforts to address the root causes of instability, the role of the Commission may be challenged.

Third, parallel to the Commission's country-specific engagement, the work undertaken by the Commission on policy development in 2012 gave priority to partnership as an area that gives substance and value to the Commission's main functions in sustaining attention, fostering coherence and facilitating resource mobilization for the six countries on its agenda.

The work of the Commission therefore has focused on strengthening its partnership with the World Bank and the African Development Bank. The Commission has taken important steps towards better alignment of national peacebuilding priorities in the countries on the agenda, with the engagement of both banks in those countries, thus ensuring a greater degree of coherence of efforts and sufficient focus on peacebuilding objectives in those countries. Given the nexus between peace and development, the Commission is also pursuing a thematic focus on job creation and rule-of-law assistance, in partnership with the banks and other stakeholders.

Fourth, similarly, the Commission sought to deepen its working relationship with key United Nations actors in the field, especially the regional political leadership and the senior United Nations leadership. An informal dialogue with Executive and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in agenda countries was launched in April 2012. In addition, in September 2012, initiatives were undertaken to forge better relationships with regional groups such as the African Union. That partnership is certainly a crucial one, requiring deeper and continuing commitment and support from the Commission's membership and the top management of United Nations alike.

Fifth, partnership with the principal organs of the United Nations is of no less significance. The report stipulates that members elected from each of the three principal organs need to lead the efforts to deepen and give substance to relations with the Peacebuilding Commission. We held meetings with the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council and the Secretariat, which is an area in which we expect to make progress in 2013. In 2012, however, in view of the need to strengthen the links with United Nations field missions and to enhance impact in the field, the Commission placed particular emphasis on the relationship with the Security Council, starting with its very meaningful interactive dialogue with members of the Council last summer. In fact, the consideration of the Commission's report on its fifth session last July in the Security Council offered an opportunity to revive the discussion on what the 2010 review described as the potential to create a new dynamic between a more forthcoming Security Council and a better performing PBC.

Suggestions to energize the relations between the two bodies have been followed up, including through the Commission's working group on lessons learned, which last December explored the scope of the Commission's advisory role to the Council on transitions of United Nations missions in countries on the agenda. The Commission has the potential to demonstrate value added by supporting a process of draw-down and withdrawal of United Nations missions that is not only grounded in sound analysis and in country-specific realities and national needs, but which also ensures that the international community remains committed to, and cognizant of, the essential links between peace and socioeconomic development beyond the lifetime of United Nations peacekeeping and political missions.

Sixth, much discussion has taken place around the extent to which the Commission is delivering on the high expectations that accompanied its creation, in 2005. Therefore, 2012 was a year when the question of collective responsibility and commitment of the membership took centre stage in the Commission's deliberations. I must say that, while we collectively managed to instil some sense of urgency in that topic, the task of translating such commitment into concrete actions and contributions remains unfulfilled. To that end, the high-level event on the theme "Peacebuilding: the way towards sustainable peace and security", which was presided over by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh in September 2012, brought together for the first time a number of Heads of State and Government, ministers and senior officials from among the Commission's broader membership. The consensus political declaration that emanated from the event reaffirmed and reinvigorated

the political commitment to key principles, objectives and priorities that the Commission has consistently promoted, both at the policy and at the country-specific levels.

Seventh, the Commission also arranged a session with the Peacebuilding Fund to harmonize the allocation of resources to priority areas.

Finally, the Commission continues to receive direct and substantive support from the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). As the Commission further seeks to strengthen those linkages and to ensure deeper collaboration and synergy with the PBF and other stakeholders, including the philanthropic, civil society, private and business sectors, it is imperative to strengthen the PBSO.

Let me end by stressing the need to envisage a new paradigm for South-South and triangular cooperation, which could reinforce national ownership in peacebuilding through focused support on national capacity development and institution-building in critical peacebuilding priorities, and which is an area that requires further commitment from Member States and the United Nations system at large. The Peacebuilding Commission is uniquely positioned to become a platform for the development of that new paradigm by piloting concrete cooperation projects in the countries on its agenda. The Peacebuilding Commission can certainly facilitate the matching of needs identified by those countries with the most relevant experience and expertise, especially from the global South.

In conclusion, the pace at which the United Nations and the global peacebuilding agenda are evolving testifies to the urgency of the need to address sources of protracted instability and drivers of relapse into conflict. To that end, we can no longer afford to remain in thrall to traditional and business-as-usual approaches to the link between security and socioeconomic development. We shall continue to face systemic challenges, but we must commit to face those challenges with the requisite resolve and determination. We have to take bolder and more courageous steps to ensure sustainable peace and security.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia in his capacity as the current Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mr. Vilović (Croatia): I thank the President for organizing today's important debate on the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on its sixth session (A/67/715) and on the sixth report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/67/711).

At the outset, I would like to thank Ambassador Momen for his presentation of the PBC report, as well as, once again, for his able stewardship of the Commission in 2012. At the same time, I thank Assistant Secretary-General Judy Cheng-Hopkins for the continuous support she and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) have given to the Peacebuilding Commission.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union later in today's debate. However, I would like to briefly add a few additional comments in my capacity as Chair of the PBC, as well as in my national capacity.

Today's timely debate, which is taking place relatively early in the year, presents us with an opportunity to take stock of the achievements attained and the challenges that emerged during the Commission's work during the past year. At the same time, today's debate opens space for broader strategic discussions on the constantly evolving United Nations peacebuilding agenda and the Commission's crucial role in ensuring that that agenda remains at the centre of the Organization's priorities for the upcoming year. Furthermore, I wish to briefly touch upon the forward-looking part of the 2013 report and reintroduce this year's priorities and the way we intend to implement them. It is our sincere hope that the General Assembly will live up to its role as one of the founders of the PBC and substantially contribute to its work, drawing on its broader policy perspective of the security, political and developmental elements of our common endeavours.

The benefits that the Commission confers — which may sound quite familiar — could be abbreviated with the brand "triple A", that is, attention, accompaniment and advocacy. The three As should be connected and put into practice based on the Commission's comparative advantage in being able to bring together all the relevant stakeholders within the United Nations and beyond. That is precisely why the Commission was established and, in ultima linea, the reason why its membership is drawn from the Organization's three principal organs and from the top financial and troop- and police-contributing countries in the United Nations.

We fully support adopting a new format for the PBC report to give particular emphasis on the results achieved in the main areas of the Commission's

mandate, as well as to the challenges and opportunities in relation to its impact on the ground. In that context, the report includes particularly important detailed references to the relevant country-specific experiences and examples, as well as suggestions for the way ahead.

Let me now turn briefly to the Commission's priorities as established in the concluding part of the annual report, which contains the agenda for action for 2013. As many members will remember, actions adopted in the report were further developed during my inaugural statement. Accordingly, I can be brief now.

First, we all agree that the PBC's role and influence very much depend upon its capability to develop and exploit the sense of collective and individual responsibility and engagement on the part of all members of the Commission. Accordingly, it is our firm intention to re-engage the PBC's main constituencies, encourage a more proactive contribution to the work and objectives of the PBC and further build upon ongoing discussions, with the aim of helping the Commission to finally take on its legitimate role and fully realize its vast potential.

Secondly, with regard to the essential issue of resource mobilization, our intention is to entrench old avenues and explore new ones in order to achieve stronger cohesion among the political, security and developmental components of the Commission's mandate, including through much stronger cooperation with, and the engagement of, the private sector and foundations. As announced, we will continue to explore those topics through thematic discussions on related issues and through direct contacts with the entities I have mentioned, including further engagement with them.

Thirdly, keeping in mind the Commission's crucial policy-coordination role, our intention is to pursue the path of bringing together all the relevant stakeholders, including in particular the international financial institutions, with a view to strengthening relations with them.

Fourthly, in our view, the role of the Commission to which I have referred also includes efforts aimed at a proper understanding of, and rapprochement with, all the other relevant initiatives and processes. Our main goal in that area is to achieve cooperation and synergy in order to improve the situation of populations on the ground and to bring about sustainable peace and economic development in the countries on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda. Eventually, we should be guided in our deliberations and actions by the goal we are trying to achieve, and not be preoccupied by the means at our disposal.

Fifthly, through discussions on the Commission's working methods, our intention is to reach a common understanding aimed at enabling the PBC to conduct its work with a greater degree of predictability. We also seek to help sustain institutional continuity and to enhance its impact at the country-level in practical ways. In that exercise, the PBC's considerable experience in working methods and the important lessons it has learned can contribute to the standardization of approaches to work at the country-level.

It is good to remember that the purpose of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is to take action in post-conflict environments in which Governments and other national stakeholders have demonstrated a strong commitment to peacebuilding. In that regard, it is only logical that more than half of the Fund's activities have been carried out in the countries on the PBC's agenda. As I stated before, we welcome all initiatives and processes aimed at furthering our common peacebuilding goals. In that context, we see the Secretary-General's initiative for civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict as an important contribution to our efforts aimed at national institution-building and at ensuing transformation. Accordingly, we welcome the Peacebuilding Fund's support for that initiative, including its efforts to draw upon expertise from the global South.

We particularly welcome the Fund's activities aimed at the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in peacebuilding, as stipulated in the Secretary-General's earlier reports. We would encourage the Fund to continue efforts to meet the Secretary-General's target of allocating 15 per cent of funds to women's empowerment programmes in the shortest possible time. In that context, we strongly support the Fund's gender-promotion initiative, launched in 2011, in a number of countries, including countries on the PBC's agenda. We look forward with interest to receiving the review of the PBF's progress on the initiative, which has been announced for the second half of 2013.

In accordance with our previously introduced priorities, we strongly encourage the Fund to further undertake activities that can be scaled up or complemented by the African Development Bank and

the World Bank, as well as to consider how the resources of the Peacebuilding Fund may act as a catalyst in supporting the priorities of other relevant processes, including the implementation of the New Deal in some of the countries on the PBC's agenda. At the same time, bearing in mind the fact that United Nations missions in some of the countries on the PBC's agenda are drawing to an end, we look forward to exploring, together with the Peacebuilding Fund, opportunities for supporting the sustainable peacebuilding impact of national institutional activities during any transition of a United Nations presence.

Finally, let me welcome the appointment of a new Peacebuilding Fund Advisory Group. I support the themes it has selected to pursue throughout its two-year mandate. We strongly believe that the appropriate consideration of those issues would significantly strengthen internal and external peacebuilding links, be they here at Headquarters, in the capitals or in the field, and improve the efficiency of our engagement.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the Commission is only as strong and functioning as its individual components, that is, its member States and the supporting United Nations system entities and mechanisms. In this critical period in the Commission's life, with the upcoming comprehensive review in 2015 and other important parallel developments, including, in particular, the consideration of the post-2015 development agenda, we should join forces and help the Commission to enhance its added value and to take its rightful place within the United Nations peacebuilding architecture and beyond.

Mr. Khiari (Tunisia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in this joint debate on the annual report (A/67/715) of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the report (A/67/711) of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

I would like, at the outset, to thank the President for organizing this meeting. I also thank His Excellency Mr. Ranko Vilović, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Croatia to the United Nations and Chair of PBC, for his comprehensive statement. Allow me also to extend my sincere thanks to Ambassador Abulkalam Abdul Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, for his introduction of the PBC report and for his dedication and strong commitment to the work of the Commission during its sixth session in order to enhance its impact on the ground. The Movement would like as well to note with appreciation the new format of the PBC report on its sixth session, which provides a comprehensive analysis of the progress made so far in the implementation of the 2010 review's recommendations, as well as of the challenges that the Commission still faces and on the way forward in enhancing its added value.

With its unique membership, the PBC is designed for and well placed to fulfil its objectives in assisting the countries on its agenda by providing sustained attention and political accompaniment and by marshalling adequate resources for post-conflict countries, as well as forging coherence and coordination among actors on the ground. The Movement supports the focus of the Commission in achieving its objectives on the following points. With regard to relations with the principal organs of the United Nations, the Movement underlines the importance of building on the important elements emanating from the Security Council debate (see S/PV.6805) and the informal interactive dialogue of 12 and 13 July 2012, respectively, and of articulating the advice that the Security Council requires from the Commission, including during discussions pertaining to mandates.

Despite those positive developments, further progress is still needed in promoting an institutional relationship between the PBC and the main organs of the United Nations, mainly the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. Without prejudice to the functions and powers of the other principal organs of the United Nations in relation to post-conflict peacebuilding, the General Assembly must play a key role in the formulation and the implementation of post-conflict peacebuilding activities. We underline as well the central role of the PBC in the formulation and implementation of such activities and functions. With regard to marshalling resources, we reiterate the necessity of providing the resources required in a timely manner in order to help to ensure predictable financing for recovery activities and sustained financial investment over the medium to long term. We stress as well the need to ensure the sustainability of funding for countries on the agenda of PBC.

In the same connection, we are concerned by the lack of coordination and coherence among financial donors, which results in duplication and redundancy in particular areas and in neglecting other catalytic

projects. Therefore, we call for the setting up of a mechanism within the PBC to review, within each country configuration, the ways and means to ensure the unity of efforts by donors in close collaboration with host countries.

With regard to forging coherence and improving the coordination of actors, the PBC is operating in a crowded field. The respective roles and responsibilities of the PBC and the senior leadership of the United Nations need to be further clarified to enable the Commission meet those crucial functions. The Movement therefore stresses the importance of ensuring follow-up to the May 2012 coordination meeting between the PBC and senior leadership on the ground.

With respect to the work of the PBC's specific configurations, we consider that additional efforts should be deployed to operationalize the principle of national ownership through the adoption of a demand-driven approach based on joint assessments with host countries. Furthermore, we stress the importance of ensuring that the country-specific configurations develop effective and cooperative mechanisms that are based on a sustained dialogue with the host countries under review.

Concerning the working methods of the PBC, the Movement emphasizes that the Commission's provisional rules of procedure need to be revisited regularly in the light of the experience gained by the Commission since its operationalization. The Movement also concurs with the identification of working methods in the annual report of the PBC on its sixth session as a key priority requiring additional progress in 2013 in order to ensure an efficient and proper functioning of the Commission.

On the specific issue of the conduct of the PBC's meetings, the Movement highly commends the delegation of Bangladesh for its initiative in convening the first high-level meeting of the PBC last September, where the declaration entitled "Peacebuilding: the way towards sustainable peace and development" was adopted. The meeting set dates for the activities of the PBC and demonstrated the strong interest of the Commission's entire membership in its work. We look forward as well to a systematic follow-up to that high-level event by demonstrating the relevance of the PBC's work to capital officials, thereby increasing their engagement.

Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund, the total contributions to the Fund significantly increased from $58.1 million in 2011 to $80.5 million in 2012. We thank the Member States that made that valuable contribution, as we also thank the new donors to the Fund. We reiterate as well the importance of increasing the funding target of the PBF, to make it more capable of financing additional projects in post-conflict countries.

The PBF must continue to be geared towards providing critical support during the early stages of the peacebuilding process to avert relapse into conflict. There is an urgent need for closer synergy between the PBC and PBF through a strategic relationship that ensures greater coherence and coordination between the two organs and avoids duplication.

In that regard, we take note of the recommendations and the revised terms of reference of the Peacebuilding Fund as contained in resolution 63/282. We also reaffirm the roles of the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission in providing policy guidance on the use of the Fund in order to maximize its impact in the field and to further increase its impact and improve its functioning; to make the fund more efficient, transparent and flexible; and to facilitate the disbursement of funds, particularly for quick-impact and emergency projects. We stress as well the need for a mechanism to assess whether allocations from the PBF are directed towards the appropriate channels that will lead to peacebuilding.

Let me conclude by reiterating the Movement's assurances of continuing constructive and meaningful engagement in all future peacebuilding activities.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I thank the President for having convened today's important meeting on the annual report (A/67/715) of the

Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on its sixth session and on the report (A/67/711) of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). This is a good occasion to look back and to take stock of the achievements made over the past 12 months. It is also an opportunity to draw some lessons and to apply them for the future. Indeed, the next two years mark a new juncture for the PBC. Ahead of the upcoming comprehensive five-year review, in 2015, the Commission needs to demonstrate accelerated progress, cohesion in New York and around the world, better cooperation with the international financial institutions and various United Nations bodies, including the Security Council, and concrete impact in the countries on its agenda.

Peacebuilding is a long-term enterprise. It goes beyond short-term crisis management and incorporates longer-term efforts to consolidate stability and build just and effective States by preventing the recurrence of conflict through sustainable socioeconomic and human development and support, which ranges from capacity-building for institutions and civil society, all the way to in-depth structural reforms.

We have learned from our common experience over the past years that no single template can be applied to fluid and complex situations where priority areas span across the areas of peace and security, development, humanitarian needs and human rights. The United Nations system, and the Peacebuilding Commission in particular, has a pivotal role to play in that respect. That is why the European Union has shown a strong commitment and has fully participated in the PBC's work since its establishment. The European Union has also been a member of all country-specific configurations of the PBC since their inception. The European Union is holding an ongoing exchange on how best to continue to support the PBC, specifically in each of its country-specific configurations.

The two annual reports before us today are both comprehensive documents thast illustrate the multifaceted challenges ahead. We appreciate the efforts by the country-specific configurations and the Peacebuilding Support Office team to provide a more analytical assessment of the PBC's work in 2012. That really helps to identify the areas where progress has been made and those where further collective engagement may be needed.

On the upside, we saw a great sense of dynamism within the Liberia configuration, which provided support for the launching of a national reconciliation strategy in the country and has put the issue of the responsible management of natural resources on the agenda. The Burundi configuration played an important role in support of that country's development, in the context of resource mobilization and support for coherence and coordination of international efforts, by supporting the organization of a very successful partners conference in Geneva in October 2012. The progress witnessed thus far on security sector reform in Guinea, notably the retirement of almost 4,000 military personnel with the help of the Peacebuilding Fund, also represents an encouraging step. A joint mission by the Sierra Leone and Liberia configurations underscored the importance and timeliness of regional cooperation among configurations, notably in West Africa and in the context of the Mano River Union.

The efforts to unleash the PBC's full potential need to continue. There are still great challenges ahead. One such challenge is the reformatting of the United Nations presences in Sierra Leone and Burundi, which needs to be closely monitored. Important other test cases are the restoration and respect of the constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau and the organization and holding of long-overdue legislative elections in Guinea. In view of the most recent developments on the ground, it is also obvious that the situation in the Central African Republic deserves our utmost attention. In all those cases, the PBC has a role to play through its convening power and central mandate as an intergovernmental advisory body at the service of the countries on its agenda.

Let us not forget, however, the most important aspect, namely, national ownership. Peacebuilding will succeed only if it is home-grown and nationally led. Our duty as the international community must consist of aligning behind nationally owned strategies. At the same time, our role in political accompaniment is possible only if there is genuine commitment by national authorities to address the root causes of instability. However, it is just as important to ensure the ownership and political will of all the members of the country-specific configurations; otherwise the element of mutual accountability for results in peacebuilding is lost. In that context, we welcome the fact that the role of members of the PBC is given special attention in the 2013 agenda for action.

In times of financial crisis, the PBC should seek alternative ways for resource mobilization, such as

engaging the private sector and forging partnerships with international financial institutions. We look forward to this year's review of the effectiveness of the PBF's global strategy by the Peacebuilding Fund Advisory Group, notably in connection with the development of the next planning cycle of the Fund for the next three years. We also welcome the PBF's intention to continue its efforts in the area of country evaluations and results reporting.

Before concluding, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the former Chair of the PBC, Ambassador Abulkalam Abdul Momen of Bangladesh, whom I would like to thank for his strong and continued commitment.

We also look forward to working hand in hand with the new Chair, Ambassador Ranko Vilović, the PBC membership and the Peacebuilding Support Office to move things forward.

The European Union stands ready to continue to support the efforts to enable the United Nations peacebuilding architecture to live up to the expectations that accompanied its establishment.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt): I would like, at the outset, to thank Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, Ambassador Abulkalam Abdul Momen, outgoing Chair of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission, for the effort exerted to prepare the report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its sixth session (A/67/715). I wish to also express my appreciation to the current Chair, Ambassador Ranko Vilović, for his comprehensive plan to broaden the scope of the activities of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Egypt aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Tunisia as coordinator of the Non-Aligned Movement caucus on peacebuilding.

The peacebuilding architecture of the United Nations is currently witnessing important developments, most notably the implementation of the exit strategy of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone in the coming 12 months and the transfer of its responsibilities to a United Nations country team. That transition experience represents an opportunity for the Peacebuilding Commission to liaise between the United Nations teams working on the ground in the countries where peacebuilding assignments have been accomplished, on one hand, and the Security Council and the General Assembly, on the other hand; and to take advantage of the experience accumulated by the Commission and its outreach to international partners to prevent those countries from relapsing into conflict.

In April 2012, the peacebuilding architecture witnessed a military coup d'état in Guinea-Bissau. The course of events in that brotherly country ever since has served to emphasize the importance of dealing with the developments in the region at large according to a comprehensive regional perspective that addresses the problems associated with the trafficking in arms, drugs and persons. It is that approach specifically that would add new momentum to the peacebuilding efforts and successes.

Egypt emphasizes the importance of the ongoing efforts to develop the working methods of the Peacebuilding Commission to become more effective and responsive to the actual needs of the countries on the ground. In that regard, we wish to reiterate the following elements: the pertinence of national ownership of peacebuilding programmes so that they can be more responsive to the national priorities of each country; the need to consolidate cooperation frameworks with international and regional financial institutions and to search for innovative and sustainable solutions for funding problems facing peacebuilding programmes, in accordance with national priorities; and the need for broader coordination among the Peacebuilding Fund and international partners, especially the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank, as well as United Nations agencies working on the ground, so as to increase the effectiveness of the resources allocated from the Fund.

Egypt stresses the relevance of the recommendations set out in the sixth report of the Peacebuilding Commission, especially with regard to activating the role of the general membership of the Commission, which is selected from a number of the principal organs of the United Nations, in order to enhance communication and coordination between the Peacebuilding Commission and those organs, mainly the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. We also advocate for partnerships to provide sustainable funding for peacebuilding programmes, with a special emphasis on partnerships with international and regional financial institutions.

The ultimate objective of the ongoing process of developing the working methods of the Peacebuilding Commission should continue to be to increase the

effectiveness and credibility of the Commission in performing its functions and duties and to further mainstream the efforts exerted in the peacebuilding architecture by building on lessons learned, with a special focus on priority themes related to peacebuilding, such as national reconciliation and achieving sustainable economic development in the countries on the Commission's agenda.

Egypt is working, in full coordination with the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Chair of the Organizational Committee, to enhance communication and coordination between the peacebuilding architecture in the United Nations, on the one hand, and the African Union, on the other, to further peacebuilding activities in the six African countries on the agenda of the Commission. In that context, Egypt has proposed establishing an African Union centre for post-conflict reconstruction and development in order to enhance African capabilities in those domains.

Egypt also stresses the importance of having proper coordination between the peacebuilding architecture and the programme to enhance civilian capacities in the aftermath of conflict, given the many crosscutting issues between them, in order to maximize their outcome in the light of the limited resources available within the United Nations, and in the Peacebuilding Fund in particular.

In conclusion, the expertise available to the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund after six successful years of work on the ground represent an important resource that should be fully utilized to achieve a breakthrough in future. Egypt expresses its readiness to coordinate with the Peacebuilding Support Office and members of the Peacebuilding Commission to make peacebuilding programmes and activities a true success story in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome Ambassador Momen's introduction of the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on its sixth session (A/67/715). We also welcome the Secretary-General's report (A/67/711) on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

The work of peacebuilding after conflicts will help eliminate the root causes of conflicts and is important for the lasting peace and sustainable development of the countries and regions concerned. As a body within the United Nations system to rebuild after conflicts, the PBC has played an important role by implementing the relevant decisions of the General Assembly and Security Council. We appreciate the achievements of the past year. We also welcome the initiative by Bangladesh in September 2012. At the same time, this type of work is a long-term, complicated and difficult task. We would like to highlight the following points.

First, the PBC and all the relevant parties should respect the sovereignty of the countries concerned. Post-conflict countries must assume the primary peacebuilding responsibilities. In doing its work, the PBC should strengthen its partnership with the country concerned, respect the priorities set by the country and help create a comprehensive development and peacebuilding strategy in accordance with the country's specific situation and needs. During the peacebuilding process, attention should be paid to enhancing capacity-building and personnel training, and the human resources and the country team of experts should be fully utilized so that the work can be done better.

Secondly, attention should be paid to the root causes of conflict, in particular the issues of economic and social development. In the countries concerned, attention should be paid consistently to the issues of political security and development. Issues pertaining to judicial reform and the rule of law should be dealt with only once the economic situation is restored. People can enjoy the benefits of peace only conce political harmony prevails and a stable security situation is maintained so that a solid political basis can be laid.

Thirdly, the PBC should also enhance its coordination and cooperation with major United Nations organs and financial and regional organizations. We hope that the PBC will strengthen its cooperation and coordination with the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the African Union and other organizations could also help to promote peacekeeping work and to achieve concrete results.

Fourthly, we call on the PBC to improve its working methods. The Commission should improve its internal work so as to achieve the best possible results. It should also set priorities for its work and strengthen its cooperation with the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and peacekeeping operations so that they are able to help each other and improve their work.

Fifthly, the international community should provide support and assistance swiftly and in a timely manner. We appreciate the role played by the PBF and

we support its work. We hope that its resources can be used to maximal effect. We also appeal to other countries to contribute to the PBF in order to provide more resources. We are seeking more channels for resources.

We consistently support the PBC and PBF and participate actively in their work. We hope they will play an increasing role in the work of peacebuilding. We hope that lasting peace will be achieved and we will continue to contribute actively to that end.

Mrs. Ribeiro Viotti (Brazil): This debate on the annual reports of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is a valuable occasion for us to reflect on the work we undertook last year and on the challenges that lie ahead. I take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Abulkalam Abdul Momen for his leadership as Chair of the PBC in 2012. We also welcome the new Chair of the PBC, Ambassador Ranko Vilović, and pledge our full support to him. I also want to express our appreciation to Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins and her team for the support provided by the Peacebuilding Support Office to the activities of the PBC.

Brazil has actively supported the United Nations peacebuilding architecture since its establishment. As Chair of the Guinea-Bissau country-specific configuration and member of the Organizational Committee, we have continuously engaged, and will continue to do so, in serious efforts to bring sustainable peace to countries facing post-conflict challenges.

The PBC and the PBF made important strides in 2012 to improve coordination in the United Nations system, to enhance their partnership with external actors, to foster the development of national capacities and to better mobilize resources to countries emerging from conflict. There is still, however, space for further improvement in those and other areas.

Brazil is pleased to see the efforts of the United Nations system to enhance its coordination and to avoid overlaps. Forging coherence within the United Nations and among international partners is a crucial step towards delivering concrete results on the ground.

If there is one quintessential aspect that defines peacebuilding, in our view, it is the development of national capacities. Peacebuilding activities should be designed first and foremost to strengthen institutions and to allow countries to gradually conceive and implement national policies on their own. As we are all aware, building institutions and nurturing local expertise are indispensable steps in order to enhance national ownership and to allow for stronger public administration.

The mobilization of resources continues to be a key component in peacebuilding efforts in order to ensure that projects are implemented and objectives are met. In the case of Guinea-Bissau, efforts were being made to align partners behind the priorities set with the Guinea-Bissau authorities in various areas. However, the coup d'état last April has neutralized those efforts and undermined the confidence of key international partners. We hope that decisive steps will be taken in Guinea-Bissau to allow for the restoration of international cooperation with the country.

In a broader sense, broadening the pool of partnerships with external actors is vital to ensuring that the PBC and the PBF continue to have a positive impact on the ground. Brazil welcomes the initiatives aimed at developing strategic partnerships with the international financial institutions in support of post-conflict countries.

Let me take this opportunity to commend the work undertaken by the Peacebuilding Fund. As the report (A/67/711) highlights, the record in annual contributions established in 2012 clearly demonstrates the international community's confidence in the Fund. The PBF has proved to be a catalytic tool, kick-starting projects and helping to generate virtuous cycles.

Brazil reiterates the importance of mainstreaming peacebuilding within the United Nations system. It is our hope that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council will have more frequent exchanges of views on the activities of the PBC in 2013.

In the same vein, closer cooperation with the Security Council should also be pursued. Given the many countries with which the Security Council is seized, the PBC represents a useful vehicle for giving greater attention to individual countries in a post-conflict situation. A dialogue between the Security Council and the country-specific configurations on a regular basis and the participation of the Chairs of the configurations in Council debates and consultations are useful tools to deepen that relationship.

Finally, let me reaffirm that the Brazilian Government will continue to play an active role in

strengthening the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. Both the PBC and the PBF have established themselves as important parts of the United Nations and of its network of support for post-conflict countries. We expect that they will continue to develop meaningful work, with a growing impact in the field. Brazil remains committed to that objective and to that process.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to express Japan's gratitude to Ambassador Momen, former Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for his stewardship over the past year. We also reiterate our desire to work together with Ambassador Vilović, Chair of the Commission for 2013. Today's debate provides an important opportunity to reflect on the work of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture over the past year and to outline steps going forward.

Japan welcomes the analytical approach taken in the report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its sixth session (A/67/715). By structuring it around themes rather than configurations, the report links the different work undertaken by the various configurations and outlines common challenges and opportunities. Our delegation believes that the PBC has the ability to analyse the effectiveness of its engagement and to flexibly adjust it in accordance with the needs on the ground. Continuous improvements must be sought to ensure the relevance of the PBC. In that context, our delegation would like to emphasize the following three points:

First, the PBC needs to find tangible areas in which it can provide added value. The relationship between the PBC and the Security Council is one area where we saw progress last year. Building on the discussions at the Security Council open debate (see S/PV.6805) and the informal interactive dialogue in July last year, Japan, as Chair of the Working Group on Lessons Learned, organized a meeting in November on the topic of the transition of United Nations missions in PBC agenda countries in order to identify areas where the two bodies can substantively cooperate. With the transition of United Nations missions in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Burundi under way as we speak, it is paramount for the Council and the country-specific configuration Chairs to work closely together this year.

Secondly, the PBC must get the actors in the field more involved. The Commission has often underscored the need to generate a greater impact in the field, yet struggled to find good ways to do so. The initiative to hold meetings between the Chairs Group and the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, which started last year, is welcome in that regard and should be continued. In the same vein, we must look for flexible ways to further involve Embassy personnel covering the agenda country in the daily work of the PBC, including through their participation in field visits. They are a valuable source of expertise in the peacebuilding process, as they are often already working in the country with the responsibility for development assistance implementation.

Thirdly, closely related to the second point, the PBC needs to realign its meetings around country-specific configurations in order to generate an impact on the ground. The work of the PBC Organizational Committee and the Working Group on Lessons Learned should be organized in close coordination with that of the country-specific configurations. Meanwhile, the country-specific configurations should try to outline follow-up actions that could be taken back by Member States of those configurations for consideration. With the 2015 review just around the corner, it is crucial that the PBC step up its work to make 2013 a different year.

The report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/67/711) captures well the progress made and the improved performance of the Fund last year. My delegation highly appreciates the diligent work of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). Key achievements include increasing donor contributions, swift decision-making, the steady and appropriate implementation of projects and performance improvements in many areas, such as security sector reform and the rule of law, as well as the greater attention given to countries on the PBC agenda.

The function of the Joint Steering Committee is crucial to enhancing the ownership and national commitment of recipient countries, as well as to implementing the projects of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) successfully.

The coordination with other developing partners also needs to be enhanced. The catalytic nature of the PBF would be further enhanced if we could improve its strategic position by strengthening dialogue and cooperation with the relevant partners on the ground.

We should also note that an upcoming comprehensive review of the PBF will provide an

excellent opportunity for us to identify clear priorities, necessary improvements and remaining challenges. Looking ahead to a new planning cycle beyond 2013, the PBF's effectiveness and catalytic role will continue to be of importance.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Japan's strong commitment to peacebuilding and to the activities of the PBC. Peacebuilding is the key to making peace and development happen simultaneously. We would also like to reiterate the importance of a field- and people-centric approach to peacebuilding. We look forward to good work being undertaken in the PBC, as well as to the wise use of the PBF — all of which requires the capable and sensible support provided by the PBSO in 2013.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Luxembourg fully associates itself fully with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

Allow me to congratulate and thank Ambassador Abdul Momen for his very dynamic leadership of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2012. I also commend Ambassador Ranko Vilović on assuming his responsibilities as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in 2013 and I wish him every success.

This is a good time to take stock, given that we are midway between the 2010 and 2015 reviews of the peacebuilding framework. The future programme of work, which has already been taken up by the new Organizational Committee, is full of specific activities that can make the PBC actions more relevant.

The new peacebuilding architecture, established by the 2005 World Summit Outcome, and more specifically by General Assembly resolution 60/180 and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005), is based on three pillars, namely, the Commission's intergovernmental cooperation, the practical support of the Secretariat provided by the Peacebuilding Support Office, and the financing of the Peacebuilding Fund, which serves as a catalyst. It is up to us, the Member States, to provide that system with the resources to carry out its work and the chance to prove itself, including by committing ourselves fully to the specific configurations. For its part, the Peacebuilding Support Office should help to strengthen its position in the institutional architecture of the United Nations by making full use of the resources available to it, in particular to strengthen support for the country configurations on the agenda.

With regard to the report (A/67/715) before us, we must acknowledge the limits of that architecture as it seeks to better use what is available to it. The Commission is not an operational entity, but rather a policy body. It is not in the field; it is based in New York. It does not really have its own funds, but it can call on the resources from a vast range of partners. The Commission draws its legitimacy primarily from its political accompaniment, the support for the mobilization of resources and the involvement of international partners at the request of countries on the agenda. The PBC is an intergovernmental advisory platform that can give considerable political weight to the work of the operational bodies of the United Nations system.

The work of the Guinea configuration, which I have the honour of presiding over, has focused, during its second year, on the implementation of mutual peacebuilding commitments agreed between the Government and the 50 odd members of the configuration in September 2011. Efforts towards national reconciliation — one of the three priorities identified for the engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission in Guinea — were put into question by discussions about the organization and the deferment of the legislative elections until 2013 and by an overwhelming feeling of distrust. Political dialogue seems to have won the upper hand now. The Government, the Independent National Electoral Commission and the political parties are together seeking ways out of the deadlock. Once the parties involved have agreed on modalities for the elections and the Independent National Electoral Commission has presented a new time frame, the President will be able to hold the elections. Currently, the international community and members of the Guinea configuration must be ready to rise to the occasion to actively support the preparation and holding of the elections.

Guinea reached some important milestones in its development during 2012 by the reaching the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and by the signing an agreement on access to funds from the tenth European Development Fund. International partners must now offer a new ambitious framework for poverty reduction so that the people of Guinea can quickly reap the dividends of peace and sustainable development. Efforts to reform the security and defence sectors have increased and are

being allocated more funds, with the encouragement by the country's President.

Many of the challenges facing Guinea are common to peacebuilding throughout the subregion, such as youth unemployment, public administration reform, security sector reform, organized transnational crime and economic integration. The three country configurations of the PBC, including three members of the Mano River Union, namely, the configurations of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, have also begun an exchange with the Secretary-General of that organization to identify priorities and themes that could be dealt with collectively at the regional level.

Luxembourg will remain actively committed to the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, whether it be as Chair of the Guinea configuration, as a member of the Guinea-Bissau configuration or as a financial partner of the Peacebuilding Fund, to which we will once again contribute approximately $520,000 in 2013. We will also remain involved in the Security Council to maximize the positive interaction between the Council and the PBC, in particular its country-specific configurations. In that regard, I continue to believe that the configurations have a valuable contribution to make to the work of the Council, including at the level of closed consultations.

Mr. Khan (Indonesia): Let me begin by thanking Ambassador Vilović for introducing the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) annual report (A/67/715). I wish to also express my deep appreciation to the previous PBC Chair, Ambassador Momen, along with the present, as well as previous, Chairs of the six country-specific configurations and the Working Group on Lessons Learned, for their very valuable work.

Indonesia associates itself with the statement made by the representataive of Tunisia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement caucus of the PBC. We also thank Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Judy Cheng-Hopkins for her leadership and her work, together with her able Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) team, in supporting the Commission's work and administering the Peacebuilding Fund.

Indonesia welcomes the 2012 PBC annual report, which outlines many important developments and achievements by the PBC and its mechanism during the year. We congratulate all PBC members, as well as other stakeholders, especially from the Governments and civil societies of the six countries on its agenda, whose tackling of challenges and successes have been essential to the conclusions of the report before us.

While there remain many persistent as well as emerging challenges, the PBC continues to make progress as a unique global platform, garnering political and financial resources with the collaboration of an expanding array of actors. The Commission does not possess its own financing, and its decisions are not binding. Yet, its gradual but concrete achievements with regard to the countries on its agenda and its sharpened focus on key global post-conflict themes over the past six years are a testament both to the drive of its members and the support from the United Nations system and its partners. That backing, particularly from the Security Council and the General Assembly, is critical for the Commission in undertaking its mandates. We hope that it will be further strengthened.

From providing support — inter alia, for the launching of a national conciliation strategy in Liberia to the successful holding of elections in Sierra Leone and support for resource mobilization to reinforce the new poverty reduction strategy in Burundi — the PBC's impact on the ground has improved in the past year. However, we concur with the observation in the 2012 report that, without broader, more vigorous and continued national commitment and leadership, as well as efforts to address the root causes of instability, the Commission's political accompaniment will be rendered ineffective. In that regard, we underline the imperative for well-supported, nationally owned and comprehensive peacebuilding. With that in mind, allow me to share the following points.

First, Indonesia will steadfastly support the PBC in continuing to implement its road map of actions, especially the strengthening of partnerships both for marshalling resources and for capacity-building. In that context, we support the conclusions of the Working Group on Lessons Learned that the PBC could identify a few influential foundations and private companies in areas of recurring priorities in the countries on its agenda and engage with them. The Burundi partners conference, for example, provided some recent positive examples. The PBC policy task force on engagement with the private sector, which was facilitated by our delegation in 2008, came up with some recommendations that we believe could be very useful in forging collaboration with philanthropic organizations and companies.

We also concur with the report that, drawing on country-specific experience, the PBC, together with actors such as the World Bank and the United Nations in-country presence, could identify specific examples of collaboration that could be scaled up and broadened.

We believe that, in addition to fostering the sharing of countries' experiences and lessons, the PBC should also advance discussions on how capacity-building can be better enabled for the six countries on its agenda that need it with practical models of engagement under the United Nations civilian capacity's initiative. Through South-South and triangular cooperation, such projects, implemented in collaboration with the Steering Committee, would also help to assess the review outcomes and to further build on them.

Secondly, the PBC's call for greater integration among the peacebuilding and development objectives in the instruments of engagement among the different United Nations and non-United Nations actors is very important. The leveraging of efforts would improve coherence, resource allocation and results. It would also simplify reporting and other procedural work for the national authorities of post-conflict countries. It would help to strengthen national ownership and better align external support with national priorities for peacebuilding and development.

Thirdly, the 2010 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture noted a lack of strong political support from capitals as one of the reasons for a less effective impact of the PBC in the field. We welcome the first PBC high-level event last year on the topic "Peacebuilding: the way towards sustainable peace and security", organized under Bangladesh's leadership. More institutionalized and regular annual sessions of the Organizational Committee would serve to bolster support and coordination with capitals, thereby enhancing the Commission's work.

Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/67/711), I would first like to commend the PBSO, as the Fund's administrator, on improving the performance of the Fund's activities and on deepening the Fund's interface with the PBC. We support the Fund's two priority settings, namely, in immediate post-conflict or post-political crisis environments and in countries where it can make longer-term grants. We note that the countries on the PBC's agenda received 40 per cent of the Fund's 2012 allocation. While we are mindful of the factors behind that allocation mentioned in the report, we want to stress that it is vital that the Fund prioritize countries on the agenda of the PBC, as stated by the Secretary-General in the report.

Apart from South-South and triangular cooperation, particularly in support of the civilian capacities of the global South and those countries with a similar experience of transition, we wish to reiterate the importance of exploring the potential of the role of the Peacebuilding Fund in assisting national authorities at their request

In conclusion, Indonesia underlines the importance of a comprehensive and properly supported approach to mitigating conflicts. For our part, we are determined to continue our contribution to further the efforts of the PBC and the PBF to build lasting peace.

Mr. Okafor (Nigeria): Today's debate provides an opportunity to review the performance of the pillars of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. In particular, it offers a unique opportunity for Member States to assess the progress in, and the challenges to, our collective efforts to support and sustain peace and socioeconomic development in countries emerging from conflict.

On behalf of my delegation, I wish to thank the President for convening this important joint debate on the annual report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/67/715) and the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/67/711). I wish to thank His Excellency Mr. Ranko Vilović, Permanent Representative of Croatia and Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for his statement. It provides some critical perspectives on the activities of the Peacebuilding Commission. Allow me also to sincerely thank Ambassador Abulkalam Abdul Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh and former Chair of the PBC, for his able and committed leadership during his tenure.

My delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Chairs of the various country-specific configurations and to the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) for their tireless efforts in supporting the work of the PBC in countries emerging from conflict. Indeed, the staff of the PBSO has demonstrated a remarkable commitment to the United Nations peacebuilding agenda.

While Nigeria associates itself with the statement of the Non-Aligned Group, delivered earlier this morning by Mr. Mohamed Khaled Khiari, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, we would like to underscore a few other issues of interest.

The recent developments in two countries on the PBC's agenda give cause for deep concern. Such developments underscore the fact that peacebuilding is not a linear and progressive process. It is a multifaceted and all- encompassing initiative that must also proactively focus on engendering sustainable peace. Against that backdrop, I would like to underline the following points.

First, when Nigeria convened the open debate on preventive diplomacy at the Security Council in July 2010 (see S/PV.6360), we were motivated by a profound concern that the nature of conflict was outpacing our collective ability to respond effectively.

After seven years of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture's existence, post-conflict peacebuilding remains a fragile undertaking. While peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict is indeed necessary, it cannot be an effective long-term strategy or a solution. Global foresight through timely intervention before a simmering crisis erupts into a conflict is a crucial peacebuilding strategy. For instance, the international community's support for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts for two of the countries on the PBC agenda, which currently face serious political difficulties, has been less than sufficiently robust. Without an enhanced commitment on the part of members of the Commission to providing adequate financial, technical and institutional support for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and associated political processes in those countries, the risk of relapse will remain high.

Secondly, there is a growing recognition that enhanced institutional capacity is central to fostering national ownership of peacebuilding efforts. Therefore, the PBC must ensure that its engagement with the countries on the agenda results in strengthening the capacity of those countries to undertake the tasks of peacebuilding.

Thirdly, we believe that members of the PBC have an individual and collective responsibility to support countries on the agenda. Such expressions of support must move beyond mere proclamations to specific action. It must be reflected in results-oriented, concrete contributions to the countries on the agenda. Those countries are on the agenda because they need international support, as well as assistance from their regional and subregional organizations. Such support should be reflected in financial contributions or sharing experiences. The overarching aim of the PBC should be to reflect on how to best systematically utilize all the accumulated lessons learned in dealing with peacebuiling in the countries on its agenda. Nigeria today offers its expertise through its Technical Aid Corps, which is a framework for South-South cooperation to support the countries on the PBC agenda for their civilian capacity-building needs.

Fourthly, the PBC should intensify its efforts to strengthen interinstitutional cooperation and partnership with all relevant stakeholders, including the principal organs of the United Nations. In that connection, Nigeria welcomes Security Council resolution 2086 (2013), which highlights the importance of the advisory, advocacy and resource mobilization roles of the PBC in peacebuilding activities, as well as in advancing a coherent approach to multidimensional peacekeeping mandates. Forging coherence and complementarities of action, as well as improving the coordination of actors, would help to reduce the overlap and duplication of efforts. It would also ensure greater clarity of responsibility and accountability.

There can be no meaningful peacebuilding without funding. That is why we attach great importance to the work of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the PBF in 2012 (A/67/711) reveals that, in spite of the global recession, the Fund witnessed an increase in contributions from $58.1 million in 2011 to $80.5 million in 2012. It is also encouraging to note that the Peacebuilding Fund is maturing and has developed a rich set of experiences. We commend Member States and other donors for their financial contributions.

For its part, Nigeria has made a significant contribution to the pursuit and sustenance of peace and security within the West African subregion and the Sahel at both the bilateral and the regional levels. Nigeria is supporting the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States to bring stability and constitutional order to Guinea-Bissau, Mali and other conflict-afflicted countries in Africa. Those efforts have taken the forms of financial, material, as well as troop contributions.

I wish to reiterate Nigeria's commitment to the United Nations peacebuilding process. As a member of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission and all the country-specific configurations of the PBC, as well as one of the leading contributors of troops to the United Nations peacekeeping missions, Nigeria has a vital stake in successful peacebuilding efforts. Today, we reiterate that abiding commitment.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): At the outset, I wish to extend my sincere thanks to you, Sir, for convening this annual debate on the report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its sixth session (A/67/715) and the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/67/711). I thank Ambassador Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, for presenting the report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its sixth session. I would also take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Ranko Vilović, Permanent Representative of the Republic Croatia and Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, for the statement he delivered. At this juncture, my delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation commends the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund for the reports submitted for the deliberation of the General Assembly. The two reports have been invaluable in underscoring the important work of the Commission and the Fund. Malaysia takes note of the reports and their findings and conclusions, which will be the basis of our deliberations today.

The Peacebuilding Commission was established to prevent countries emerging from conflict from relapsing into conflict. As an intergovernmental advisory body entrusted to coordinate and integrate approaches on post-conflict peacebuilding measures, the Commission has continued to play an important role in assisting such countries in navigating that perilous journey.

Malaysia shares the views reflected in the report, especially on the importance of developing national capacity and resource mobilization as key principles to a successful peacebuilding initiative. Without national capacity there can be no governance, and without resources there can be no development. We support the continued efforts of the Commission in mobilizing international support and interests from various players, including the World Bank and the African Development Bank in that endeavour.

The report outlines various progress and developments in the six country-specific configurations under its agenda. My delegation is especially encouraged by developments in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Burundi. We believe that the progress in those countries is a testimony to the legitimacy of the strategy of the Commission in its work and the strong cooperation between the PBC and the Governments of those countries. Nevertheless, we believe that efforts should continue towards achieving sustainable peace, stability and development. At the same time, my delegation is of the view that the Commission should intensify efforts in supporting the remaining countries under its agenda from relapsing into conflict.

Malaysia is not new in supporting the development and progress of developing countries and countries emerging from conflict. We have continued to demonstrate our commitment in the development of human capital and governance through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme. Officials from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic have benefitted from the Programme. Through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme, Malaysia has trained a total of 163 officials from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau in various programmes, including capacity-building programmes, public administration, agricultural management, diplomacy and customs and law enforcement.

There is no doubt that the work of the Commission must continue and be enhanced. The Commission's advisory role on peacebuilding matters with United Nations organs, particularly the Security Council, must continue to be strengthened. Malaysia commends the progress made in enhancing relations between the Commission and the Security Council. We encourage further consultations and discussions between the two organs to support peacebuilding programmes in the countries under the Commission's agenda.

While the progress in our work, as reflected in the report, has been a welcome development, Malaysia is of the opinion that coherence and coordination between the Commission and the various United Nations entities at the field level must continue to be enhanced. My delegation is of the view that such coordination in the field is important, as most of the Commission's work and assistance take effect at the field level.

Malaysia takes note of the developments in the working methods of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission. Reform of the working methods of the Commission would ensure efficiency, credibility and continuity to future generations. My delegation is of the view that developments in the working methods of the Commission must continue to be updated so as to ensure coherent policy development and transparency and cultivate institutional memory that would further strengthen the Commission.

Malaysia also takes note of the relationship between the Peacebuilding Commission and the concept of civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict. That synergy can be further explored in gauging expertise from countries that have emerged from conflict in order to endow the Commission with experience and knowledge. While taking note of that important development, my delegation is of the view that cooperation and collaboration between the two sides should be more specific and centred on important thematic issues such as economic revitalization, the development of governance and national reconciliation.

My delegation underscores the fact that resource mobilization is a key element in supporting countries in a transition towards peace. In this regard, Malaysia takes note of the Secretary-General's report on the Peacebuilding Fund. We are encouraged by the increased contribution of $80.5 million in 2012. That demonstrates a widespread belief and trust in the Fund on the part of Member States and donor entities in supporting the peacebuilding agenda of the United Nations.

Malaysia will continue to place our trust in the Peacebuilding Fund to support the Commission in its work in the six countries on its agenda. Apart from the six countries on its agenda, Malaysia takes note that the Fund has supported 19 other countries and 19 United Nations agencies in various programmes that support peace and stability.

While the Fund has contributed to the work of the Commission and various other countries and United Nations agencies, Malaysia would like to underline that more Member States and international donors must contribute to the Fund. At the same time, Malaysia would also like to echo the call for transparency and accountability in the disbursements of the Fund by ensuring that best practices are inculcated in the management of the Fund.

Peacebuilding requires the cooperation and coordination of all key players, both international and from the host country. The Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund have continued to play this important role of enabling nations in duress to stabilise and prosper. We should continue to support the Commission and the Fund in this noble endeavour. It is Malaysia's aspiration to see greater commitment from Member States and international players to supporting sustainable peace and stability through the work of the Commission. Malaysia stands ready and looks forward to working closely with all its members in support of peacebuilding.

Mr. Briz Gutiérrez (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, Ambassador Abulkalam Abdul Momen, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission for 2012, for having presented the report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its sixth session (A/67/715). We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Croatia, Ambassador Ranko Vilović, current Chair of the Commission, for his statement, and we wish him every success in his work this year.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We welcome the new format for presenting the report of the Peacebuilding Commission, in accordance with the recommendations resulting from the 2010 review. The report places greater emphasis on the progress achieved by the Commission, the opportunities and challenges ahead, and ways to enhance the impact of its support. It also contains a broad-ranging analysis of the implementation of the recommendations of the 2010 review, which offers a clearer vision for the direction to be taken.

As a country that overcame its own internal conflict in 1996, we value the support of the international community to peacebuilding. The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, and in particular the country-specific configurations, was useful in mobilizing such cooperation. In addition, their activities over the past six years have also been an important source of lessons learned in the specific and varied situations.

We recognize the work carried out by the country-specific configurations, which represent a genuine nexus between the concept of peacebuilding and its

application to situations on the ground. In this respect, as highlighted in the report, we stress the importance for the national stakeholders in the respective countries to demonstrate leadership and firm commitment in order to ensure that the support provided by the Commission has the desired impact.

Concerning the main functions that we have identified for the Commission — resource mobilization, political support and the promotion of coordination — allow us to make the following observations.

We are pleased to note that the Commission has continued to enhance its resource mobilization efforts, identifying gaps and the relevant stakeholders and programmes to be mobilized. We recognize that the interruption of constitutional order has a negative effect on the mobilization of resources, and we agree that there is a need to continue to support the countries on the agenda to create national systems that help to attract sustainable financial and technical support.

We welcome the Commission's readiness to pay attention and provide political support to countries on its agenda, in addition to the support provided by other entities, supporting for example Governments in shouldering new responsibilities that arise due to the change in the nature of the United Nations presence in the country, as will be the case in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

We reiterate the need for the Commission use its political influence to promote the necessary coordination within the international community on the ground by enhancing the support of the various stakeholders to the peacebuilding strategies and priorities established at the national level. The progress achieved under the Commission's initiatives to improve coordination at the country level should help the Commission to promote the creation of transparent mechanisms that bolster that coordination and national involvement.

We recognize in particular the great usefulness of the Peacebuilding Fund, and we are pleased to confirm that total contributions to the Fund increased significantly in 2012. We hope that the Fund will continue to receive the sustained support it needs to fulfil its functions.

Guatemala shares the Commission's commitment to the search for lasting development and peace in countries emerging from conflict, and recognizes the value of the relationship between the Security Council and the Commission in better addressing conflicts and other situations in the countries on its agenda. We will continue to support the work of the Commission as a mechanism to meet the specific needs of countries emerging from conflict.

Mr. Touray (Sierra Leone): Allow me to thank the Secretary-General and the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for the instructive and forward-looking report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/67/711) and the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/67/715), presented as mandated by General Assembly resolutions 63/282 and 60/180, respectively. Sierra Leone warmly welcomes both reports, which, inter alia, accurately reflect the programmes and activities of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in Sierra Leone during the reporting period.

Let me also thank the outgoing Chair of the PBC, the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, for presenting the report of the PBC, for steering the work of the Commission in an exemplary manner during his tenure, and for his support for the work of the Chair and members of the Sierra Leone configuration. In a similar vein, I would like to join other delegations in welcoming the new Chair of the PBC, Mr. Ranko Vilović, Permanent Representative of Croatia, and assure him of Sierra Leone's support.

We acknowledge the effort made by the PBC in taking forward the recommendations of the 2010 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture (A/64/868), in particular the initiation of activities by the Commission on a path towards strengthening its impact and demonstrating value added, both in the field and as a policy platform for the normative development of the peacebuilding discourse in the United Nations and beyond. In that regard, we note the efforts of the Commission in strengthening its relationship with operational entities of the United Nations, especially the senior United Nations leadership in countries on the agenda of the Commission, the Chairs Group and the international financial institutions, and more importantly, its efforts aimed at strengthening linkages with the principal organs of the United Nations. We encourage the Commission to continue interacting with the World Bank, the African Development Bank, regional organizations and operational actors of the United Nations system to strengthen partnership and alignment of activities. That is of crucial importance,

as it has the potential to strengthen the Commission's political advocacy, resource mobilization and efforts to address transnational organized crime and drug trafficking.

We urge the Commission to continue building on its contributions to the work of the Senior Advisory Group, particularly in the area of improving the United Nations contribution to the strengthening of national capacities for peacebuilding. The fundamental principle of national ownership and the importance of supporting national civilian capacity development and institution-building will no doubt broaden and deepen the pool of civilian expertise for peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict. In that regard, the Commission should monitor and make recommendations on the implementation of the Secretary-General's civilian capacity initiative and assess its practical implications for national capacity-building in critical peacebuilding priority areas.

It is clearly important to emphasize that countries emerging from conflict need an institution like the PBC that will serve as a platform of support, providing them with advice, raising their profile internationally, building trust and dialogue among the various national stakeholders, and mobilizing financial resources for immediate and long-term peacebuilding priorities. In that regard, the PBC should incorporate the findings of the Working Group on Lessons Learned, as well as inputs from expressed views of Member States on the need to develop a field-centric approach and ensuring timely and predictable financing of peacebuilding activities over the medium- to long-term.

We acknowledge and appreciate the role of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), which remains critical to the Commission's efficient functioning through the provision of assistance in the development of the instruments of engagement, the assessment of progress towards commitments made therein, or the unblocking of obstacles and identification of opportunities for resource mobilization.

Sierra Leone's engagement with both the PBC and the PBF has been quite fruitful. As underscored in both reports, the Commission has, through the relentless efforts of the Sierra Leone configuration, the PBF and donors and development partners, seen tremendous progress in our peacebuilding efforts. Those achievements range from support to our democratic and good governance institutions to aligning the peacebuilding elements of our development framework with the joint vision of the United Nations country team, resource mobilization efforts and political accompaniment.

The successful conduct of elections in 2012 amply exemplified those achievements. In that regard, we commend the PBF, the PBC and development partners and donors for their valuable contributions towards the conduct of successful elections in November 2012. The process was exceptionally peaceful, technically well organized, and characterized by a high voter turnout. It demonstrated the growing capacity of Sierra Leone's national institutions and marked the crossing of a significant peacebuilding threshold. That could not have been easily achieved without the accompaniment of the PBC or support from the PBF, key development partners and donor countries.

Going forward, Sierra Leone is in the midst of articulating its priorities for the next five years. In that regard, Sierra Leone's emerging priorities for the Agenda for Prosperity reflect the much-desired shift in emphasis towards fostering economic growth, improving social services and building human capital. To that end, and by way of building on the Agenda for Change, we are developing a strategy to address our next priority development challenges. We therefore urge members of the Sierra Leone PBC configuration, the PBC membership in general, the PBSO and development partners as well as donors, to support our development aspirations, including the seamless transition to a strong and well-resourced resident coordinator system.

The Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration, Ambassador Guillermo Rishchynski of Canada, visited Sierra Leone in February this year, and his report and briefing of the configuration underscore progress made in addressing key peacebuilding priorities and the need for enduring support, particularly in the area of youth unemployment and empowerment, security sector reform, support for the proposed constitutional review process, management of natural resources, the stemming of drug trafficking and transnational organized crime through a coordinated subregional approach, and the need for strong private sector growth that could translate into a more tangible peace dividend and sustainable peace consolidation.

We are convinced that the composition of the delegation demonstrates the PBC's continued determination to sustain international support for

Sierra Leone. Let me at this juncture express Sierra Leone's unreserved gratitude to the Chair and members of the Sierra Leone configuration for their unflinching commitment to achieving Sierra Leone's peacebuilding and development transformation goals.

We believe that the Chair's visit, as has always been the case, was quite rewarding. Sierra Leone looks forward to more regular visits as they provide an important platform for all actors and stakeholders to speak out on achievements as well as challenges. The arrival of the mission soon after the recent United Nations technical assessment mission also presented the opportunity for an informed consideration of the transition process from the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone to a resident coordinator system.

In conclusion, as one of the first countries on the PBC's agenda, Sierra Leone has charted a path for others to potentially learn from. This has involved adjusting early approaches in order to make more effective use of PBF resources, lower the bureaucratic burden placed on Governments, and better align with national priorities. It has also entailed a shift in perspective away from heavy field-level engagements with an operational focus to a more political role that concentrates on how the PBC can serve as an international platform for advocacy and action on all aspects of peacebuilding.

However, despite those achievements, several outstanding issues will require effort over the longer term. Evidently, now is the time for the international community to pay greater attention to Sierra Leone by providing the required continued assistance to build on the gains achieved to date. Similarly, there is a need for a measured transition that takes into account the filling of critical gaps that might occur during and after the transition process. Above all, the pace of transition should match needs on the ground, especially given the potential for small investments at this stage to make a substantial contribution to consolidating hard-won peace. In that context, we welcome the remarks by Ambassador Guillermo Rishchynski, Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration, on the need for the configuration to turn its attention to supporting the transition process, including by advocating for any necessary resources to fill gaps created by the drawdown.

Finally, we emphasize the need for the PBC to align its engagement with the Government of Sierra Leone's new priorities articulated in the eight pillars of the Agenda for Prosperity.

Mr. Guerber (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland welcomes the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on the work of its sixth session (A/67/715). We particularly welcome the analytical approach of the report, which is structured according to the main recommendations of the 2010 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. Using concrete examples drawn from the six country-specific configurations of the Commission, the report identifies the key challenges and opportunities for the PBC.

To avoid a repetition of the main points of the report, with which we entirely concur, I shall limit my statement to three points, in particular on the basis of our experience as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the PBC. Generally speaking, we believe that peacebuilding actors could play a more central and strategic role in the overall architecture of the United Nations. This is particularly true not only for the PBC as an intergovernmental advisory body, but also for the Peacebuilding Support Office.

First, the efforts of the PBC should focus on the actual impact on the ground and thus the work of the six country-specific configurations. The establishment and strengthening of partnerships with stakeholders within the United Nations system and other actors, such as international financial institutions, are crucial in this regard and deserve continued consideration. Links with the private sector should also be explored further. However, merely establishing partnerships is not enough. Ensuring the coordination and consistency of reciprocal efforts is key to their success. The positive results of the Burundi development partners' conference, held in October 2012 in Geneva, showed us how well-managed partnerships can make a difference.

Secondly, the question of the transition away from United Nations missions and the role of the Commission in this process needs to be better understood. Three of the six configurations of the PBC — those for Burundi, Sierra Leone and Liberia — have achieved decisive milestones in this regard. We welcome the preliminary discussions in the Commission's Working Group, and hope to continue and expand this important debate in order to better define the value added of the PBC in transition processes. Those discussions should ideally be carried out in close collaboration with the Security

Council, which has the final say on the completion of United Nations missions.

Thirdly, and more generally, we are of the opinion that the PBC must better promote its role as the main forum for exchanges on peacebuilding at the United Nations, given its unique composition, which brings together all the relevant major United Nations groups. We are, for example, very much in favour of including issues related to peacebuilding in the development programme for the post-2015 period. Thus, a debate that is focused on those aspects could be held in the PBC.

However, the Commission should not simply address United Nations processes. The potential of the Busan process of the Group of Seven Plus and the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States should also be explored and discussed within the PBC. After all, the six countries on the agenda of the Commission have signed on to the New Deal.

Before I conclude, allow me to say a few words about the Peacebuilding Fund, as the report on the Fund (A/67/711) is also under consideration this morning. We welcome the valuable contribution of the Fund to the promotion of peacebuilding, and we especially welcome the announcement by the Assistant Secretary-General, Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins, that a third financial tranche will be assigned to Burundi. We also encourage efforts to better coordinate the Fund with similar instruments of the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme.

To conclude, we would like to express our sincere thanks to Ambassador Momen of Bangladesh, former Chair of the PBC, under whom this report was written; the staff of the Peacebuilding Support Office; and Assistant Secretary-General Ms. Cheng-Hopkins and her team for their valuable efforts.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): At the outset, let me express gratitude to the former Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Momen of Bangladesh, for his informative presentation of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) report on its sixth session (A/67/715), and to the current PBC Chair, Ambassador Vilović of Croatia, for his comprehensive statement. My delegation fully supports the priorities outlined by PBC Chair Ranko Vilović.

While Ukraine aligns itself with the statement by the representative of the European Union, I would like to make a few points in my national capacity.

In our view, the PBC report before us today, which contains a valuable analytical component, duly captures important manifestations of the Commission's added value and its comparative advantages. In particular, my delegation welcomes PBC support for the successful conduct of elections in Sierra Leone, the launching of a national reconciliation strategy in Liberia and resource mobilization in support of a new poverty reduction strategy in Burundi. At the same time, we agree with one of the conclusions that the unique membership structure of the Commission and its nature as a political platform made up of the most influential global actors has yet to be realized.

Going forward, our priority should remain the implementation of the outcome of the 2010 review in order to further boost PBC relevance, performance and impact on the ground. This, in our view, should include sharpening the Commission's analytical profile and enhancing its interaction and closer cooperation with the Security Council. The PBC must also give due and comprehensive consideration to situations where two countries on its agenda have experienced a disruption of their constitutional order, thus undermining the progress in peacebuilding. A leading role in that exercise can be played by the relevant country-specific configurations and the Working Group on Lessons Learned.

We fully share the conviction that only a more relevant, more flexible, better performing, better supported, more ambitious and better understood PBC will make a difference on the ground. In this respect, my delegation looks forward to the early implementation of the innovative agenda going forward that concludes the Commission's report.

Peacebuilding is one of the pillars of Ukraine's multidimensional contribution to United Nations activity in the area of international peace and security. In this regard, we understood our membership in the PBC Organizational Committee in 2011 and 2012 as a privilege and a responsibility in equal measure. Among the highlights of Ukraine's first experience in the Commission was our vice-chairmanship of the Organizational Committee in 2011 and active involvement in the Chair's group; participation in the first-ever field visits of the inclusive PBC delegations

to Guinea and Liberia; and contribution to the activities of the steering group of the Liberia configuration.

We are also glad to have been able to contribute substantially to a number of areas that are important for increasing the added value of the PBC. Particular attention was paid to the strengthening of the Commission's thematic edge in terms of such crosscutting issues as women's participation in peacebuilding, gender mainstreaming, children and youth in peacebuilding and the peacekeeping and peacebuilding nexus, as well as to its institutional consolidation and more robust interaction with the relevant United Nations organs. Here, the first-ever joint PBC/UN-Women high-level event comes to mind.

I would do injustice to Ukrainian peacekeepers if I did not mention that my country's contribution to the United Nations peacebuilding endeavour has also been channelled through its active military, police and civilian engagement in over 20 missions under the auspices of the United Nations. As a practical follow-up to our first membership in the PBC in general and its Liberia configuration in particular, Ukraine intends to send a new generation of the formed police unit to the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

We will do our best to further advance the United Nations peacebuilding agenda and strengthen the impact of the PBC in post-conflict and fragile societies. It is against that backdrop that we hope to be entrusted with the responsibility of serving in the PBC in 2014 and 2015, representing the General Assembly category.

In closing, I would like to express our full support of the Peacebuilding Support Office and Peacebuilding Fund.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.